

describe “the current situation in Iraq to a foreign visitor,” some groups focused on positive aspects of the recent security improvements. But “most would describe the negative elements of life in Iraq beginning with the ‘U.S. occupation’ in March 2003,” the report says.

Some participants also blamed Iranian meddling for Iraq’s problems. While the United States was said to want to control Iraq’s oil, Iran was seen as seeking to extend its political and religious agendas.

Few mentioned Saddam Hussein as a cause of their problems, which the report described as an important finding implying that “the current strife in Iraq seems to have totally eclipsed any agonies or grievances many Iraqis would have incurred from the past regime, which lasted for nearly four decades—as opposed to the current conflict, which has lasted for five years.”

Overall, the report said that “these findings may be expected to conclude that national reconciliation is neither anticipated nor possible. In reality, this survey provides very strong evidence that the opposite is true.” A sense of “optimistic possibility permeated all focus groups . . . and far more commonalities than differences are found among these seemingly diverse groups of Iraqis.”

Madam Speaker, the Iraqi people themselves firmly believe that reconciliation will not happen until we leave. If the Iraqi people want us to leave and a majority of the Iraqi Government wants us to leave and a majority of the American people want us to leave, then why on Earth are we still staying?

As I have said on a number of occasions today, what is contained in the underlying bill is a blank check. There are no restrictions on the tens of billions of dollars that we are going to give the President in support of his Iraq policy. There is no conditionality. There are no timetables for withdrawal. There is nothing. This is a blank check. We are into the fifth year of this war, and after all that we have seen, after all that we have been told that has turned out not to be true, it seems unbelievable to me that this Congress would vote for yet another blank check.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reject this latest blank check, which essentially is in support of an endless war in Iraq, and vote “no” on the underlying bill. I ask for support of the rule.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS, FISCAL YEAR 2008

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 893, I call up the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 72) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2008, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the joint resolution.

The text of the joint resolution is as follows:

H.J. RES. 72

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Public Law 110-92 is further amended by striking the date specified in section 106(3) and inserting “December 31, 2007”.

SEC. 2. Public Law 110-92 is further amended by adding at the end the following new sections:

“SEC. 160. Notwithstanding any other provision of this joint resolution, there is appropriated for payment to the heirs at law of Julia Carson, late a Representative from the State of Indiana, \$165,200.

“SEC. 161. Notwithstanding section 106, the authority to provide care and services under section 1710(e)(1)(E) of title 38, United States Code, shall continue in effect through September 30, 2008.

“SEC. 162. Notwithstanding section 106, the authority provided by section 2306(d)(3) of title 38, United States Code, shall continue in effect through September 30, 2008.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 893, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within to revise and extend their remarks on House Joint Resolution 72.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Madam Speaker, I know the gentleman from California has to get to another meeting, so I will not take long. Everyone understands what this is. It is a continuing resolution that keeps the government open until the last day of the year so that the President can review other pending legislation.

I do want to just take one moment to bring to the House’s attention the fact that a good and faithful servant of the House will soon be leaving this institution, John Daniel, who is sitting next to me and who, if he could, would wring my neck because I am even mentioning him.

John has served the Rules Committee, he has served the leadership, and he has served the Appropriations Committee for many years with extremely excellent judgment and extreme dedication to this institution. He is a strong institutionalist. There are a lot of people in this institution who demagogue the institution every day. John is not one of them.

I simply want to express my profound thanks to him for the service he has given the House in general and most specifically the service he has given to the Appropriations Committee. We hate to see him leave, but sometimes

even the best of congressional staffers have a lapse in judgment. That is the only thing that can explain his departure in this case.

With that, I am ready to yield back when the gentleman is ready to yield back.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I have said all I need to say about this bill except to echo the chairman’s remarks regarding John’s service.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. I yield back my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 893, the joint resolution is considered read and the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the joint resolution.

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1445

TAX INCREASE PREVENTION ACT OF 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 3996) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend certain expiring provisions, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendment is as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Tax Increase Prevention Act of 2007”.

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF INCREASED ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX EXEMPTION AMOUNT.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Paragraph (1) of section 55(d) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to exemption amount) is amended—

(1) by striking “(\$62,550 in the case of taxable years beginning in 2006)” in subparagraph (A) and inserting “(\$66,250 in the case of taxable years beginning in 2007)”, and

(2) by striking “(\$42,500 in the case of taxable years beginning in 2006)” in subparagraph (B) and inserting “(\$44,350 in the case of taxable years beginning in 2007)”.

(b) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*—The amendments made by this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2006.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX RELIEF FOR NONREFUNDABLE PERSONAL CREDITS.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Paragraph (2) of section 26(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to special rule for taxable years 2000 through 2006) is amended—

(1) by striking “or 2006” and inserting “2006, or 2007”, and

(2) by striking “2006” in the heading thereof and inserting “2007”.

(b) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*—The amendments made by this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2006.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from