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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. GUTKNECHT].

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 19, 1995.

I hereby designate the Honorable GIL GUTKNECHT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of May 12, 1995, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 25 minutes, and each Member, other than the majority or minority leader, limited to 5 minutes. But in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] for 5 minutes.

ELECTIONS IN HAITI

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, while we were at work here this past weekend trying to get out of the budget stalemate we are in, there were events going on in the world that are of very, very great importance to American interests.

In Russia, as you know, there are elections there. We are now sifting through and sorting out exactly what those elections meant.

Initially, though, not very much noticed at all, were other elections nearby in the small, tiny nation of Haiti,

just to our south, a friendly neighboring country. It is an election that Americans had a great stake in, primarily because we have invested on a per-capita basis probably more money in that election than any other in recent history. We have a huge American taxpayer dollar investment there in the growth of democracy, and I think it is very important that we have a full assessment of the way the moneys have been spent and how that tiny nation is doing on its path to democracy.

I think the important thing to say now is that the good news from Haiti is that there is no bad news; but the bad news is there is not much good news either.

Haiti did not have full, fair, free elections. But they did have a step in the right direction because they were able to carry out elections on a countrywide basis for a new President without any of the violence that we have seen in previous elections in that country.

The IRI [International Republic Institute] was there monitoring the progress of their elections, and they concluded in the conversations that I had in a telephone conversation with our on-the-ground team that what happened on Sunday in Haiti was important but it was not conclusive. So I think we are in a position now where we have got a pretty good assessment of the electoral process underway, the technical problems they had. What we do not have is a full assessment of what happened and where we are going now to justify the investment of taxpayer dollars and the American troops we have had there and what we should do next.

I think it is clear that we had low numbers in the Haitian election both in terms of candidates who are participating and in terms of voter turnout. The estimates in voter turnout are called light. The election was called lackluster, uninspiring. There are a lot of reasons for that.

It is true there are a lot of candidates who did not run, for a variety of reasons. Primarily the presidential campaign time was a very abbreviated time. It was about 4 weeks or so, and the campaign tactics themselves were nearly invisible. There was not a lot of campaigning, and there was not a lot of interest generated in the country as a result through the normal campaign tactics that you see for a presidential election.

The fact that much of the loyal opposition, including several of its major parties, boycotted the elections is not a good sign for democracy. People who feel compelled to go outside the system and will not participate inside the system and do not feel welcome or feel frustrated or feel it is so tilted they cannot have a fair chance clearly are making a statement when they say, "We are being forced outside the system."

It is also a fact that in Haiti, I think voter fatigue is a possibility. They have had a lot of elections, and I think that an awful lot of voters are saying the same things to reporters today they were saying to me after the parliamentary elections in June, and that is,

Why should we keep voting for this democracy thing? I still do not have a job. I am still hungry. My family is still hungry. I voted three times. Nothing is better. I am not sure democracy works. The only thing I know is Aristide is my hero.

And unfortunately, Aristide was not on the ballot because constitutionally he cannot succeed himself, and a lot of people probably stayed home because the person they wanted to vote for they could not vote for, so they registered their objection that way.

I think many others stayed home because the election was clearly, those who were organized were the one party that was ready for it and had all of the resources and the blessing apparently of the international parties, and they

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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