

water, there is not a single dollar dedicated to deal with the drinking water in the recent environmental degradation of the Great Lakes along New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, and Indiana. We have a bipartisan bill to dedicate \$4 billion over 5 years to restore and upgrade the environmental quality of the Great Lakes where drinking water is provided for 40 million Americans, equal to the amount we are pledging for 1 year in Iraq.

Just this week, we are talking about spending \$4 billion for the Iraqi police. Yet the administration's budget cuts \$1 billion for the 100,000 police program here in the United States.

So what I did is produce a T-shirt. It envisions and puts on the front the President's reconstruction budget for all of Iraq and Afghanistan, the two proposals. On the back are the cuts here at home in the respective areas of health care, education, veterans health care and veterans hospital, veterans benefits, but also the cuts in job training and job growth.

In the last 2 years, Americans have lost 3 million jobs, 45 million Americans are without health insurance, 25 million of that 45 work full-time but have no health insurance.

We have taken 4 million Americans out of the middle class and put them in poverty and nearly \$1 trillion worth of corporate assets have been foreclosed on. That is the net result of the economic policies.

We have a vision for Iraq with an additional \$20 billion of reconstruction dollars, of American taxpayer dollars being spent on their roads, their health care, their ports. Um Qsar, a great port in Iraq, is being dredged. Yet we have a 10 percent cut in the Army Corps of Engineers here in the United States, which all of us use to keep our economic vitality and job growth in our districts.

The same values that we hold for Iraq we must pledge for all Americans. The same goals we envision for Iraq's future we must envision for America. Unfortunately, we have had two priorities, two sets of values, two sets of books, one for Iraq, their children for tomorrow and one for America.

I do not think I will ever not support our efforts in Iraq, but I will not support the deconstruction of the United States, and somebody can be cynical enough to now see how the votes for Iraq's reconstruction can be compared to what we are doing here at home, a \$90 billion cut in Medicaid, compared to the 13 million Iraqis who will get universal health care. Somebody could see that as wrong; opening up new universities in Iraq, while we cut \$500 million from Pell grants here in the United States.

So I ask my colleagues on the other side as they consider on the eve, and I understand the pressure of being loyal to our President and loyal to an administration's goal, to think about what this means what we are doing here at

home. Americans over the last 40 to 50 years have been very generous. They have funded the Marshall Plan, brought Europe back to its feet, helped build Japan after World War II. They have continually donated and helped other countries, but America will not be generous if the dream of a tomorrow for America is diminished compared to the dream we hold for the Iraqi people.

So as we are on the eve of debating the \$87 billion, we need to support our troops; but we need to support our people here at home for their education, their jobs, their health care, their economic development of their communities and the safety of their communities. We should treat our veterans who come home with the same respect we are treating the forces in Iraq that we are trying to rebuild.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### THE REAL STORY OF IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CHOCOLA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

This recognition is without prejudice to the resumption of legislative business.

Mr. CHOCOLA. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the vote that we as Members of Congress are going to be asked to make in the near future and that is a vote we have already heard about tonight and that is the \$87 billion appropriation to support our men and women in uniform and the citizens of Iraq.

This is a lot of money, there is no question. And there is much commentary and maybe even some people would say much rhetoric revolving around this issue, but as we decide how to vote as Members of Congress and the American people develop an opinion on how they feel about their tax dollars being invested in this manner, I think it is imperative that we understand the real story of Iraq. I think it is imperative that we get beyond the rhetoric and the politics because this issue is way too important and has implications for generations to come, what the answer to the question about supporting the men and women in uniform

and the citizens of Iraq with \$87 billion is going to be.

I think we have to rely on facts, and the only way that we can understand the facts and discover the facts is to go seek them out for ourselves. That is why I went to Iraq not too long ago. I returned about 3 weeks ago, and I commend other Members of Congress that have taken the time and taken the effort to go find out for themselves what the real story of Iraq is.

I have to admit, when I went, I went with apprehension, and I did not go with apprehension because I was concerned about my personal safety. I went with apprehension because I was concerned that I would find the story of hopelessness, of pessimism because I had read the papers and I had watched the television, and it did not look like a pretty picture; but when I returned home, I had great optimism and I had great hope because what we see on TV and what we read in the papers is not the real story of Iraq and is not representative of what is actually happening on a day-to-day basis in that country.

When we landed, I really could not believe I was in the same country that I had seen on TV and read about in the papers. This was not a country in chaos. This was not a country where one felt unsafe and in fear for their personal safety. It was a country that was recovering from a scar of over 30 years of a brutal regime that its people had to live under. Sure, there are challenges that we are going to face and there are tragedies that happened, but there is also great hope, and there is great optimism because there have already been great successes.

The problem is the good news is not news. When a torture chamber that used to house Saddam Hussein's political prisoners gets turned into a police academy where tens of thousands of Iraqi police have been trained to protect their citizens and protect their country, no cameras show up, no reporters show up. When a school reopens, in fact when 1,000 new schools have been built in Iraq, there is not one reporter; and there was not one camera. When the power comes back on, when businesses can operate on a consistent basis, when restaurants can open, there are no reporters and there are no cameras. When the crop is harvested, thousands of acres of wheat, again, there are no reporters and no cameras, and businesses are opening every single day; but again, it goes unreported. But when there is one tragedy, certainly every camera and every reporter in the country is covering that story.

But for those that have visited Iraq, those that have actually taken the time and the effort to go, it cannot go unnoticed because a success is so clear and so obvious and so exciting and inspirational that we come back and we tell our stories. This is not a partisan issue. This is a situation where Republicans and Democrats have come back

and told the real story of Iraq with great hope and great optimism.

What we hear tonight, and I am sure we will hear in the future, is a lot of comments from people who have not been to Iraq, people who do not know the real story and are engaging in rhetoric and politics; and I think that is a great, grave danger, not only to our citizens but for all of our children and our grandchildren for generations to come.

We come back and we share stories of why we feel the way we do, and that is what we are here to do tonight. I am here with several other Members that have traveled to Iraq, and we are going to share our stories about why we share so much hope and so much optimism; and I would like to share just one story before I turn it over to some of my fellow Members.

I was in Iraq for 3 days, and I would just like to share one day, to give my colleagues a sense of what the experience was like.

□ 2030

The group I was with, we flew into Mosul, a town in the northern part of Iraq. When we got out of the plane, it was shocking, because most Americans think that Iraq is very much a desert country, all sand. This looked like northern Michigan. There were hills. There were trees. It was a lush green area.

As we got out of the plane, I noticed new construction, a building that was being built right next to where the troops are; and I asked, what is that? One of the local troops said, well, that is a local Iraqi entrepreneur. He is building a coffee shop for the troops to serve their needs. So here is a local Iraqi entrepreneur that is putting his own money into serving our troops and engaging in commerce. Does not sound like a country in chaos to me.

We went in and got a briefing. We got a briefing of all the successes that have already happened in the northern part of Iraq in the Mosul area. This is the briefing that we got.

Now we hear a lot of people say there is no plan for reconstruction, that there was never any thought to how we were going to win the peace. This is a plan that is not only about what we are going to do, but more importantly what has already happened. In this plan are discussions of the schools that have been rebuilt, the transportation projects, the employment projects, the water projects, and the banking. There is a chart of the local elections that have already taken place. Over 200 local elections have already taken place in Iraq, with representative governments in place which represent all of the ethnic groups in their localities.

So we had this briefing of the tremendous successes, and then we went into the town of Mosul. During that trip into town we were not in an armored vehicle, we had no bulletproof vests on, and we were in the center of town with the people of Mosul. What

we saw was commerce. We saw restaurants. We saw children. We saw everything portraying the normalcy of life and never once felt threatened for our safety or worried that anything was going to happen, which is what we see represented on the nightly TV.

After our trip downtown, we went back to the airport and we met with some of the locally elected officials. We met with the vice mayor of Mosul. This was a very impressive gentleman. With him were other locally elected officials. They represented the local ethnic representation. There were men, and there were women. There was never an opportunity under Saddam Hussein's regime to have an opportunity to have local representative government.

Shortly thereafter, we left and we went to Tikrit, Saddam's hometown. We flew in helicopters for about an hour; and we basically followed the Tigris River down to Tikrit, which is a little further south. From horizon to horizon on each side of the river all we saw was wheat. All we saw was fertile farmland. In fact, if Iraq had had the opportunity to have modern practices and techniques of agriculture and production, they have enough potential basically to feed the entire Middle East.

The most amazing thing to me was that it had been harvested, and it had been harvested just a couple of weeks ago. A country in chaos, a country that has no potential could never harvest hundreds of thousands of acres of wheat and store it effectively and use it for the benefit of their people.

As we approached Tikrit, Saddam's hometown, it was a stark picture. In the middle of town is Saddam's palace, 144 buildings in the palace compound. Now these are not small little garages. These are all villas and palaces. And on one side of two 10-foot walls that had barbed wire or guard stations every so often was basically obscene opulence that Saddam had built this palace for himself and his family. On the other sides of the wall was obscene poverty and pestilence.

I think that represented exactly how he ran his country. He would spend all of the country's resources, the riches that it has, and it has many riches in the form of oil and water and agriculture, he spent all of those riches on himself, on his family, on his palaces and on his weapons. He did not spend any money on the people of Iraq. He did not spend any money on upgrading their power supply or helping their infrastructure. I think that that was a very stark picture. It had been described as Las Vegas without the neon.

As we landed there we had the great opportunity, and this was the highlight really of the trip that I was on, at every meal we had the opportunity to visit and have a meal with the troops. That night we had dinner, and there was a very poignant moment, I thought. Every time we had a meal I would ask the troops, what do you want me to tell people when I go back home about your stay here?

There was a young woman soldier that looked at me and she said, you know what I want people to know is that I am here serving in harm's way in Iraq for the protection of my family and my country back home. Because she said, see, if we are successful here in Iraq, Iraq will become the model of democracy in the Middle East. It will help bring stability to a region that has not seen stability in hundreds if not thousands of years. If we are not successful, Iraq will become the home of terrorists and murderers and radicals who export violence and murder all over the world; and that will put my family and my country at much greater risk.

I have to say I was very impressed with her observations, and I think that she really put this whole discussion into context. The \$87 billion the President is asking for is a lot of money. But when we think about the consequences of failure, we have no choice but to succeed. If we succeed, we can help bring stability to a region by helping a democratic, secular, free government emerge.

Iraq has every ingredient for success and every opportunity to help its people have a bright future. Because the tools of the recruiters of the terrorists is hopelessness and oppression. The people that are causing problems, their worst nightmare is that we are successful, because it will take away every argument they have. It will change their world. If we are successful, it will change our world as well because we will live in a much more stable world, where people are not strapping bombs onto their backs because they see no hope in life.

If we can help the Iraqi people form a free and democratic government that brings hope, that brings economic prosperity, I think that is the best investment we can make as an American people. We have a history of generosity in this country, and I do not think it is time to stop that history. We recognize that \$87 billion is a lot of money, but when we consider that September 11 cost us \$2 trillion, I think it is a wise investment.

Madam Speaker, I want to yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS), who was on the trip with me; and I know that he has some very inspirational stories to tell as well.

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Indiana for yielding to me.

So much of what I experienced, of course, when I got back, was similar to what the gentleman just related. I can remember sitting down to watch the national evening news back in Texas and turning on the television and hearing a news anchor that everyone is familiar with. His lead story was Iraq, and he started talking again about the hopelessness and the quagmire and we are just barely holding on and it looks like an operation gone terribly wrong. And I had to ask myself, did I get off the wrong plane? Did I perhaps land in

a parallel dimension? Because I did not recognize the country that he was talking about. I did not recognize the country that I had just left hours before.

I think General James Conway in Babylon, the ancient city of Babylon, stationed there with the First Marine Expeditionary Force, they were one of the first groups into Iraq, his description of what is going on in that country is what stuck with me. He described Iraq as a vivid success story. He also went on to say that Iraqis are not concerned that we are going to stay too long. Madam Speaker, they are most concerned that we are going to leave too soon. Apparently, that has happened to them before.

Just as my friend from Indiana pointed out about how normal life was in Mosul, even that first day, flying over the city of Baghdad, the markets were full. There were cars on the road. Indeed, there were traffic jams on the road. There were satellite dishes on the rooftops of the apartments and the houses. I do not know the number, but probably 25 to 30 percent of the residences had satellite dishes on the rooftops. And bear in mind, Madam Speaker, that merely 6 months ago possession of a satellite antenna was punishable by 1 year in one of Saddam's prisons. Kind of a daunting prospect.

The schools were open. Agriculture, as my friend from Indiana pointed out, was flourishing. And, indeed, flying over those wheat fields north of Tikrit, where the harvest had just happened at the end of August, it was nothing short of startling. It looked like Kansas below us. Albeit the Kansas of 150 years ago, but it looked like Kansas.

From a military standpoint, the combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom was prosecuted brilliantly. There is no remaining strategic threat. Stabilization is the current goal of our offensive operation: to find, contain, and kill those who would harm our troops or innocent Iraqi citizens. And, of course, 80 percent of the engagements are within the so-called Sunni triangle.

The police force in Baghdad is nothing short of a miraculous transformation. This is a police force that has gone from a mission statement that included brutality and contempt and corruption to one that emphasizes proper police procedure in a free and democratic society. Bernard Kerik, the police commissioner from New York City who gave so many of us comfort 2 years ago after the attack of 9/11, was working in Iraq when we were there. I believe he has returned to this country now, but he has been nothing short of a miracle worker there in Baghdad. He has gone from 0 to 35 precincts in 14 weeks time. That is 14 weeks time he has gone from 0 to 37,000 Iraqi policemen in uniform and expects to have 65,000 by next May.

In health care, we have to put it in the context of no significant expenditure in health care for almost 30 years. In fact, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Keller, a good Texas boy from Hale

Center, Texas, a registered nurse who is with the 385th Civil Affairs Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Keller told me he visited the medical school library in Baghdad and could not find a textbook that had a copyright date later than 1984. Does anyone suppose there have been any improvements in the practice of medicine in the last 19 years?

Pharmaceutical agents that were manufactured in Iraq were useless. The bioavailability of those compounds was so variable that even Iraqi physicians were frightened to use them. But Saddam had the edict, if it is made in Iraq, it is good for Iraqis. In fact, we relied heavily on donations from the Kuwaitis after the fall of the Saddam government. Again, to put it in perspective, Saddam's per capita medical expenditure was 50 cents a person per year. Currently, that is up to about \$45 per person per year, but they have a long way to go.

My friend from Indiana did an excellent job of describing the opulence of the palaces that were provided for the ruling class in that country. No dollar was left unspent. The architecture of those palaces was truly horrible, but the site planners and the landscape architects had a good deal of skill. Because when Saddam stood in those palaces in Tikrit, he did not have to see the poverty on the other sides of the wall that was described.

But, Madam Speaker, what was most searing to me was to put the opulence of those palaces next to the poverty of the hospitals; hospitals that could not even afford linoleum for their floors; hospitals that could not afford to have medical gases piped into their neonatal intensive care unit. Do you suppose a premature baby is ever going to need oxygen? Unfortunately, at the Al Yarmouk Hospital, if a neonatal intensive care case needed oxygen, they would have to find a cylinder, if they could.

Finally, if I could, let me just reiterate what happened within the first 90 days after the fall of the Saddam regime. Schools completed their academic year and conducted testing. Over 90 percent of the major cities and towns have functioning town councils. Over 60,000 Iraqis are contributing to their own security. Not in the police force, this is an additional 60,000 that are in their military and are serving as border guards. The prisons are on the verge of reopening. The judicial additional system is up and functioning. Food distribution, with some minor glitches, food distribution was not interrupted at the conclusion of the combat phase. Indeed, no humanitarian crisis grew as a result of the major combat phase. Hospitals, although below standards, remained opened and functional. Four and a quarter million children were immunized between May and the end of August.

I point these things out because General Sanchez told us that all of these things happened within 90 days. Contrast that with Kosovo, where none of

those things were in place a year after the combat phase ended.

□ 2045

Madam Speaker, let me go back for a minute to the issue of no humanitarian crisis occurred in Iraq. What if there had been 15,000 heat-related deaths in the country of Iraq this summer? Would we have taken some negative press for that? Well, no, that humanitarian crisis was in France, not in Iraq; and I do not really recall reading a whole lot about it in this country.

Suffice it to say, we are not getting an accurate story or picture on what is going on on the ground in Iraq. The only time I remember seeing any reporters at all was when we were at the Al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad. They are not going to find the stories that they need to be telling in the lobby of the Al Rasheed Hotel.

Mr. CHOCOLA. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments.

I would like to ask a question regarding General Sanchez and the outline of the successes which have been achieved, but when I got back home, I heard people say there is no plan to help rebuild Iraq. I am curious after visiting with General Sanchez and the briefings we were given about the plans in place, the successes which have already been achieved, is there a plan to help rebuild Iraq?

Mr. BURGESS. I do not believe this degree of success was achieved in the absence of a plan. Of course they have a plan in place, and of course they are executing it brilliantly.

The Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, as General Sanchez pointed out to us, they will be developing the pre-constitutional convention, then convening the constitutional convention, writing the constitution and having elections.

They outlined a timeline for us of 18 months, give or take 6 months; so 1 to 2 years time. That information was given to us the last week of August. We have only recently seen those reports in the newspapers here in this country, but the story was clearly out there and available.

General Raymond Odierno in the city of Tikrit, clearly that man has a master plan, and that plan is to find, contain, and kill those elements within the city of Tikrit who mean harm to our troops and Iraqi citizens. I believe the gentleman from Indiana and I sat in the same briefing where he described how he isolated a whole peninsula of individuals who mean harm to our troops and innocent Iraqi citizens and with overwhelming force took that area out in a very brief period of time.

I think we have a workable plan and I think we have a winnable plan for winning the peace. Again, it is at this point so critical that we not lose heart, that we not lose faith and that we adequately fund what is required to bring that country to some measure of peace and stability.

No question about it, lack of fuel and lack of electricity are radical issues. In

Mosul, it was pointed out to us that dollars are ammunition; and right now we cannot afford to starve them of ammunition.

Mr. CHOCOLA. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS); and I agree 100 percent there appears to be a solid plan in place for success which has been executed to a great extent.

The amazing thing is I have not heard any Member that has been to Iraq who disagrees with the gentleman. The only people that disagree are the people who have not taken the time and taken the effort to understand what the plan is. It sounds more like politics than planning to me. As we make this decision, it is so important that we understand the real story of Iraq and we base our opinions on facts.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) to share the story of Iraq.

Mr. SHUSTER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and for putting this Special Order together.

Tonight we need to shine light on the facts, on the truth of what is really happening in Iraq today. It is not the real story. It is not the whole story. We are getting bits and pieces, and we know that it is still a dangerous place, and they are killing American soldiers, and that is something that we ought to be concerned about.

But, as we have talked about here tonight, there are positive things happening in Iraq. There are things moving forward. The Iraqi people are grateful that we have come to Iraq to liberate them.

As May 1 came about and we ended major combat operations over there, I, as most Americans did, would listen to the nightly news and hear stories of death and chaos and mismanagement. And then every week we would come to Washington and get a briefing, and the story was different. So I decided in May that I had to go over there and see for myself what was occurring in Iraq and see with my own eyes because I was hearing the administration tell us what they said was happening, and then of course the national media would tell a different story.

The good news is, as we have heard here tonight, when we traveled to Iraq, we did see positive things, and I was struck with three things.

First, I wanted to go over and see what the situation with our troops was. I heard morale was low, the troops were unhappy. Much to my surprise when we arrived and had the lunches and dinners that the gentleman spoke about, which were a highlight of the trip and we were able to gain much information from them, I found out that the morale was good, it was high. When we think about the dangerous situation they were in, 130 degrees plus, living in tents, sand, dealing with all those elements, these young men and women had high morale. These young warriors talked about how they were proud to

be over there liberating the Iraqi people and protecting America and our freedoms and freedom for people around the world.

One of the things that I did when I came back, I was asked by several soldiers to call their families, and I did that. I can tell Members, as impressed as I was with the soldiers I met, it was inspirational to hear the parents and the wives when I called them, to hear them talk about how proud they were and how much support they were giving their son, daughter, husband or wife. It was really inspirational to me. They said not only were they supportive and proud of what they were doing, we were doing the right thing in Iraq.

I think it is imperative for the American people to hear the whole story so we have that support for our troops, we have that support for the effort we are undertaking over there, and that our Commander in Chief has that support. Because, without that support, we will not succeed. We have to have the American people strongly behind this effort, and that is the only way we will see success, if the American people support this effort.

The second thing that I saw while I was over there, and, as I mentioned, the national media would feed us a steady diet of death and destruction in Iraq and that picture was not the case as we talked here tonight about the many, many things that we saw in Iraq. For instance, the hospitals, they were not hospitals like we see here in America, but they were functioning hospitals. And many if not most of the major hospitals in Iraq are up and running today. The schools and universities are operating. Secondary schools are ready to take the kids on in the fall so they can begin that process, to continue to educate the young people of Iraq.

We talked about the security, the 56,000 trained Iraqis that are out there and walking the streets of Baghdad and Mosul protecting the borders. That was something to behold. We traveled to the headquarters and the training for the Iraqi police force; and we met Ali Kazon, who is now the head of the Iraqi police force. He told us the story how in 1979 he was head of the police academy, and when Saddam Hussein took over, he spoke out against Saddam, and he was imprisoned and almost on a daily basis for a year he was tortured. And now 20 some years later, he is back and ready to take up his role to build a stable and democratic Iraq.

We were told the story just 4 weeks before we arrived in Iraq there was an assassination attempt on a gentleman's life. He was shot in the leg. He was bandaged up, and 2 days later he was back on the streets going after the guys who tried to assassinate him.

And just 2 weeks after we left Iraq, there was a bombing at police headquarters, and it was another attempt on Ali Kazon's life. We were told that this man is somebody that the

Baathists, the terrorists, want to eliminate because he will be a force for good in a free and stable Iraq.

He told us what he told his soldiers or his police as he recruited them. He talked about we do not know the Americans, they do not know us, but they came here and died to free us, so every day when we take to the streets of Iraq we need to honor the Americans for what they have done for us, giving us our freedom.

Madam Speaker, it truly was inspirational to meet someone at the founding of a nation. As we talked about, most of the major cities and most towns and villages had elected municipal councils, and this occurred just 2 weeks after major combat had ended in Iraq. Today, as I said, every major city and most towns and villages are directing local matters themselves. Iraqis are doing that work.

The third thing that we saw and something that surprised me, although I do not know that I should have been surprised, as someone who has studied history all my life, but we focus on Iraq, and it is all about the oil and they certainly have tremendous oil reserves, and that is going to provide the Iraqi people the wealth to rebuild their country and have a stable Iraq in the future. But, as the gentleman from Indiana talked about, the agriculture was surprising. I thought Iraq was a desert, but it is not. It is brown, and I think a lot of that is because of the heat, but they have vast wheat fields. Also, the water resources that Iraq has, not only do they have the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, but they have miles of canals. They are able to irrigate much of the Iraqi countryside.

In the south, with a pick and shovel, they can dig down 10-12 feet and hit water because the water table is very shallow. In the north, as we flew over vast wheat fields, they were literally digging water wells horizontally, going in at an angle down 20-40 feet before they would hit water. So Iraq has oil and the ability to feed itself and the Middle East, and they have tremendous water resources that any successful nation needs to feed its people and take care of its people.

Finally, the Iraqi people themselves are a robust people; and proof of that is they have spent 30 years living under a Stalinist tyranny, living under terrible circumstances, but they have survived. Almost half the population is literate, so with the resources they have, with the personality of the people, what we are doing for them over there, giving them the opportunity to live free and to create a democracy, we are giving them hope. That is what any nation needs. Giving the people hope is going to take them off that path of strapping on a bomb to themselves and killing themselves.

We need to make sure that we are putting enough money into this situation. We talked about the \$87 billion. It is a lot of money when we look at it as \$87 billion, but when we look at the

losses that America suffered after 9/11 and the losses we could face in the future if we are not able to help build a stable and democratic Iraq, this is something we must do. We cannot fail in this endeavor. We need to move forward swiftly to make sure that the Iraqi people can build that stable, democratic country.

□ 2100

Mr. CHOCOLA. I thank the gentleman for his comments. As you mentioned, one of the highlights of this experience was the opportunity to share a meal with the fine men and women in uniform. We can sit here, and we can say how proud we are of them, but until you are actually there with them and seeing the tremendous work that they are doing, I do not know that we can appreciate their efforts and their competence.

During one of the meals, again I always ask, what do you want me to share with people when I go back home? We were in Babylon in this historic city where Saddam had built another palace to himself. A young soldier who had been very quiet during the meal, he looked up and he said, what I want the people at home to know is that the Iraqis that are shooting at us and setting off bombs, those aren't the Iraqi people I know. The Iraqi people I know are very appreciative that we are here. They thank me every day. I go out in the marketplace, and I don't feel threatened. That's what I want the people at home to know, is that the Iraqi people very much appreciate our efforts.

Then later, right after that meal, you will remember we went to a mass grave site. That was probably one of the most moving experiences that I had during the trip, where we visited this mass grave site where up to 15,000 people had been murdered, many of them buried alive. They told us about how that grave site was discovered and the conditions. Do you remember that? Do you want to share that story?

Mr. SHUSTER. Absolutely. That was one of the best stories that I have taken away from Iraq. Not only did we see firsthand the commitment and the bravery, the courage of our young men and women, but the decency of the American soldier. The story we were told was that when they found the mass grave site, the Iraqi people as they do to celebrate or in anger when they come together is they shoot their weapons off into the air. It is very dangerous because when you shoot a bullet up, it has to come down, and when you have several hundred people doing that, there were people being killed. The Marines told these folks that were going up to the mass grave site that they could not celebrate in that way. They were not allowed to shoot guns off into the air, so it was a very heated exchange. The Iraqis were angry because they could not do what they typically do.

So they went to the mass grave site, they collected the remains of many of

their family members, and as they came back into the village, they came face to face with a patrol of Marines. It was a tense moment. Without somebody from high up, some bureaucrat in Washington or some general in the Pentagon or some general in the field, a young sergeant decided the best thing to do was to order his men to stand aside, take their helmets off and bow their heads to pay respect to the families, to the people that had perished and to honor them as they passed.

I truly look at that, when I think about the American soldier and we think of, as I said earlier, how courageous they are, truly, how compassionate they are. That is a demonstration of that. It is really a touching story. It makes me very, very proud to be an American, to know that we not only train fierce warriors, but compassionate soldiers, compassionate people.

Mr. CHOCOLA. Again, I thank the gentleman. I think you are right. I think that the secret to our success in Iraq is not just going to be firepower or dollars, it is going to be the content of the character of the men and women in uniform, and, certainly, we saw that they have tremendous character. They represent American ideals and values better than we could ever imagine. I think we certainly owe them a debt of gratitude for their efforts.

Mr. SHUSTER. I think it was General Sanchez that said to us that the way for us to succeed, to win this, to finally win this, is not going to be militarily, it is going to be through the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, helping them to rebuild a country and giving them back their country.

As you mentioned earlier, the thing we do not hear about in the media, they say that there is no plan. As you mentioned and showed, one of the plans as I recall, we met with General Sanchez who is the head of operations in the Iraqi theater. Then we met with four of the five division generals, commanders in Iraq. Every time we sat down for a briefing with any one of them, they gave us a similar plan.

Even General Dempsey, who controls Baghdad, that is his area of control, he talked about when we were there at the end of August, they were already starting to make plans and starting to move toward taking our control, our base out of the center of Baghdad and moving it to the four corners of Baghdad. That was a month ago. I have not heard about that. I have not heard about it in the national media. I have heard about it in our briefings, that General Dempsey is starting to make those moves, so that we are looking into Baghdad, not looking out. They believe that that is going to be a better way for us to help the Iraqi people, so we are not sitting in the middle and the Iraqi people then can take control of the security of Baghdad.

So there is a plan. We know that, and we have seen that. That is why it is so important tonight for us here and to go

back to our districts and talk about these plans, to talk about what we saw. I would encourage every Member of the House of Representatives, all 435 Members, to get on a plane, go to Iraq, see what is over there, because I think as you have pointed out tonight, they come back and tell a different story, or a full story of what is going on in Iraq. I would encourage all of the Members of the House to travel there and see it firsthand.

Mr. CHOCOLA. Again, I thank the gentleman. I share in his encouragement for all Members possible to go there and see for themselves what is happening and share those stories.

#### EXTENDING TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut (during special order of Mr. CHOCOLA). Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 3146) to extend the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant program, and certain tax and trade programs, and for other purposes, with a Senate amendment thereto, and concur in the Senate amendment.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Clerk read the Senate amendment, as follows:

Senate amendment:  
Page 10, after line 16, insert:

#### SEC. 402. EXTENSION OF PROVISION EQUALIZING URBAN AND RURAL STANDARDIZED MEDICARE INPATIENT HOSPITAL PAYMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 402(b) of the Miscellaneous Appropriations Act, 2003 (Public Law 108-7; 117 Stat. 548) are each amended by striking “September 30, 2003” and insert “March 31, 2004”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect as if included in the enactment of the Miscellaneous Appropriations Act, 2003.

(2) AUTHORITY TO DELAY IMPLEMENTATION.—

(a) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary of Health and Human Services (in this subsection referred to as the “Secretary”) determines that it is not administratively feasible to implement the amendments made by subsection (a), notwithstanding such amendments and in order to comply with Congressional intent, the Secretary may delay the implementation of such amendments until such time as the Secretary determines to be appropriate, but in no case later than November 1, 2003.

(B) TEMPORARY ADJUSTMENT FOR REMAINDER OF FISCAL YEAR 2004 TO EFFECT FULL RATE CHANGE.—If the Secretary delays implementation of the amendments made by subsection (a) under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall make such adjustment to the amount of payments affected by such delay, for the portion of fiscal year 2004 after the date of the delayed implementation, in such manner as the Secretary estimates will ensure that the total payments for inpatient hospital services so affected with respect to such fiscal year is the same as would have been made if this paragraph had not been enacted.

(C) NO EFFECT ON PAYMENTS FOR SUBSEQUENT PAYMENT PERIODS.—The application of subparagraphs (A) and (B) shall not affect payment rates and shall not be taken into account in calculating payment amounts for services furnished for periods after September 30, 2004.