

I urge my colleagues to support my resolution and call on the President and Congress to support the policies that ensure that all workers are treated with dignity and respect.

NEWS WE DO NOT HEAR ABOUT FROM IRAQ

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I just returned from Iraq with 15 bipartisan colleagues, and I learned that 90 percent of Western reporters have left Iraq. Those who remain can only get their stories out if they report injuries to Americans. We are not allowed to learn what else is happening in Iraq.

The press does not like to report on other press, but that is a story here. Iraq had only one newspaper, Uday Hussein's newspaper. Now it has over 100, like Azzaman, Ashiraa, Ibn Al-Balad, Al-Nahdhah, Al Mutamar, and an English-language newspaper, Iraq Today. But today is also the first day of school in Iraq, and we have now bookbags given to children in Iraq. This is a bookbag filled with school supplies, notes, calculators, rulers, pens, papers, that went to 1.5 million Iraqi children for the start of school. These are also things that are happening in Iraq, but we are not allowed to hear about them from our newspapers.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

(Mr. MATHESON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, I want to draw attention to the issue of national debt. It has been 874 days since this administration came into office. During that time, the national debt has increased by \$1,142,246,097,598, and according to the Web site for the Bureau of the Public Debt at the U.S. Department of Treasury, yesterday at 4:30 p.m. eastern daylight time, the Nation's total outstanding debt was \$6,782,571,483,957. Furthermore, in the current fiscal year we are in, 2003, which actually ended yesterday, interest on our national debt or what I call the "debt tax" is \$304,978,878,641.

It is time for Congress to pay attention to this disturbing trend.

A SALUTE TO THE 495TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY

(Mr. PUTNAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome home the more than 100 men and women of the Florida National Guard's 495th Transportation Company from Lakeland, Florida as they arrive back in the United States

and return to their families. I want to thank them for their courage, their service, their bravery, and I want to thank their families for their patience through this long ordeal. The 495th took small arms fire during its tenure in the desert, luckily without casualties.

Floridians should be proud of the service and tremendous accomplishments of the 495th Transportation Company. These men and women risked their lives and made sacrifices to keep our country safe and secure and secure those same blessings for the Iraqi people.

Mr. Speaker, the men and women of the 495th Transportation Unit have each played an invaluable role in their own communities for years. They are now home again to retake their place in businesses, schools, fire stations and farms. And I believe Staff Sergeant Stephanie Miller said it best: "I'm just glad to be home. Glad we made it back safe."

God bless Stephanie. God bless all her colleagues, and may God continue to shower his blessings upon this great land.

URGING CONGRESS TO VOTE AGAINST PAYMENT FOR RECONSTRUCTION IN IRAQ

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me associate myself with the words of the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) to welcome the Immigrant Freedom Riders who will be coming to the United States Government to petition for equality and justice similar to the movement and rise made by those who fought hard in the Civil Rights movement.

As I think about civil rights and civil justice and liberty, I cannot help but be so very proud of the young men and women who stand on the front lines in Operation Iraqi Freedom. I say to the parents and friends and family members who have lost those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, we will never forget. I also want to make mention, Mr. Speaker, of those who lay wounded in our hospitals without eyes, without limbs, and that is why I rise today to point out to the American people and to this Congress that it would be unpardonable, it would be atrocious for us to randomly vote for \$87 billion that is being asked by this administration without first bifurcating the vote, voting for the troops and the resources that they need, the armor that they need, but yet looking to distinguish between the reckless dollars that they are spending in this so-called reconstruction without allies.

I am glad the children of Iraq have bookbags. The children in Houston, Texas do not have any bookbags. It is time for this Congress to take up its responsibility and not vote for the \$20

billion for reconstruction and support our troops.

UNFUNDED LIABILITIES AND THE DEFICIT

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, the good news is that there are indications that we are having an economic recovery. In both the third and fourth quarter, we are looking at economic expansion much greater than what was earlier predicted. But this still leaves a great obligation for this Chamber and the Senate and the White House to look at the reality of the situation where we are spending more money than what is coming into government. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the last fiscal year of 03 we will have a deficit of \$562 billion. This fiscal year for 2004, we are going to have a deficit, which means spending over and above revenue of \$640 billion. That does not include the \$87 billion for Iraq.

We need to start looking not only at the debt burden that we are leaving our kids and our grandkids, but the unfunded liabilities. These are promises that we have made in programs such as Social Security where we do not have enough money to pay promised benefits. We need to consider all of these unfunded liabilities and the deficit along with the mounting cost of servicing this debt. And I hope my colleagues will join me in sponsoring my Social Security bill, H.R. 3055.

THE FOX INSPECTING THE HENHOUSE

(Mr. MCDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the theater of the absurd is opening a new farce. The plots of the old one, the fox, Mr. Ashcroft, is inspecting the henhouse, looking for someone who broke the law by revealing an alleged CIA employee to the press.

Does anyone believe that they are going to use all the power of the Patriot Act, that they are going to go through the library records, the medical records, the visa records of everybody in the White House to find out who committed this crime? How can this Congress sit here with a straight face and allow that to be the way this issue is revealed? There ought to be an independent counsel. There is no way you can convince the American people that John Ashcroft, whose campaign manager was Karl Rove in the last election he lost, is going to do a real investigation of who broke the law in the White House.

This Congress cannot let that go by because no intelligence agent is going