

official objectors for the Private Calendar for the 108th Congress are as follows:

For the majority:
 Mr. COBLE of North Carolina;
 Mr. CHABOT of Ohio; and
 Mrs. BLACKBURN of Tennessee.
 For the minority:
 Mr. BOUCHER of Virginia;
 Mr. SCHIFF of California; and
 Mr. GRIJALVA of Arizona.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

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

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purpose of entering into the RECORD how I would have voted on issues before the House on which I was unavailable to vote on Wednesday, October 29; Thursday, October 30; and Friday, October 31.

On Wednesday, October 29, on rollcall No. 577, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 578, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 579, I would have voted "yes."

On Thursday, October 30, on rollcall No. 580, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 581, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 582, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 583, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 584, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 585, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 586, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 587, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 588, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 589, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 590, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 591, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 592, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 593, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 594, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 595, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 596, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 597, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 598, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 599, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 600, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 601, I would have voted "yes."

Mr. Speaker, the reason for my absence and for not voting on these important issues was because I was a member of a congressional delegation that went to Iraq to visit our troops and to personally observe conditions there.

We were able to visit our troops in Landstuhl, Germany, who have been injured bringing freedom to Iraq. We saw the excellent job our forces are doing, simultaneously setting up a free and fair democracy while bringing evildoers to justice and establishing peace in Iraq. We saw the people working together regardless of ethnicity or religion, to restore businesses and hope to a country formerly under control of despots. Because of our troops and the freedom they are establishing in Iraq,

the people there have hope, which they have not had since Saddam Hussein became dictator.

Mr. Speaker, while the business before this House is important, we must also realize that the foundation for all of our actions in this Chamber is the freedoms granted to us in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Our presence in Iraq is allowing the Iraqi people to, for the first time, establish a Constitution where the Iraqis will have the freedom to vote for a representative government, where the rule of law will prevail, where citizens will not fear for their lives, their property or their freedom. Let us not forget why we are able to participate in this body, and let us not deny that freedom to Iraq.

PEACE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

(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, I simply want to talk about the issue of peace for a very brief moment.

Just a few minutes ago, this House passed the defense authorization bill. As a strong opponent of the initial entry into Iraq of our troops in 2002 when the resolution was on the floor, my opposition stems from the fact that there was a question as to whether or not there were weapons of mass destruction and whether we were under imminent attack. I rise today to say that there is a very important role that our troops around the world can play. The United States has always had the high moral ground on the question of peace.

I would like to turn our attention in this Nation and this administration to the idea beginning to formulate plans for peacekeeping. That is not what is occurring in Iraq today. Primarily as we see the loss of life accelerate, we need to begin to work steadfastly to draw out collaborators and allies around the question of peace.

We were successful in Kosovo and Bosnia because we had the NATO allies. We were successful in Liberia because we had the work of President Obasajno of Nigeria and his peacekeeping efforts. It is imperative that this Nation begins to formulate a strategy for peace and utilize our troops to lift up peace in this world.

DISCOUNT DRUG CARDS

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

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, the Medicare conferees are about to wrap up their important work on providing a prescription drug coverage plan for America's seniors; and I am excited about the impact it will have on my district, the 16th Congressional District of Florida, which has the fifth

largest population of Medicare-eligible seniors in America. Legislation I have worked on over 4 years with Senator HAGEL includes the drug discount card which is part of this historic landmark legislation which will provide for over 40 million seniors the opportunity to receive up to a 25 percent discount on their prescription drug costs.

This is good news for seniors, welcomed good news for our seniors in the 16th Congressional District, and I am hopeful as we continue our bipartisan negotiations that when we conclude our work on Medicare, it will not only be reformed, it will become cost effective, and it will also contain the vital new programs necessary to modernize for the first time in over 35 years this vitally important safety net, a medical delivery system for our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the drug discount card, I applaud the White House for their leadership in taking the idea of Senator HAGEL and myself to make it permanent law, and we welcome the opportunity to reach out to seniors with this good plan.

VETERANS ISSUES

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

Mr. BALLANCE. Mr. Speaker, next week we will honor our Nation's military veterans for their dedication and service to the Nation, and I take great pride in this day of remembrance. A little more than 30 years ago, I had the privilege of serving in our National Guard of North Carolina, and so it is with distinction today that we remember the veterans: the veterans of the allied engagement in the Persian Gulf War, the brave men of the 7th Cavalry at the battle of Ia Drang, the airmen of MiG Alley in Korea, the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II, and so many others deserving of the highest honors. They all are brave men and women who are our United States veterans, and I am proud this morning to stand in honor of our veterans.

Next week we will honor our nation's military veterans for their dedication and service to the nation, and I take great pride in this day of remembrance.

A little more than 30 years ago, I service in the North Carolina Army National Guard, during the conflict in Vietnam. Times were uncertain then, soldiers were leaving the nation in droves, coming back seasoned veterans of a war. We did not honor our veterans in the way they deserved those many decades ago, and we have learned since that time.

And so it is with distinction today that we remember the veteran; the veteran of the allied engagement in the Persian Gulf War, the brave men of the 7th Cavalry at the battle of Ia Drang, the airmen of MiG Alley in Korea, the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II, and so many others deserving of the highest honors. They all are our brave men and women who are the United States Veteran.

I am of the belief, Mr. Speaker, that the men and women who served our nation should be