

Americans can tell the difference between a photo op in the Rose Garden and a reality check in Iraq. Things are not getting better. At every opportunity to talk straight to the American people, the administration has chosen to sacrifice credibility in hopes of perpetuating its story. Trouble is, the real story about Iraq is every night on the news. The administration can try and change the rhetoric, but the American people are not changing the channel. They know what they see and read. They know it is not what the administration claims. They know that only new leadership will solve the crisis in Iraq and revive the economy at home.

The administration had its chance, again and again and again and again. The rhetoric got better, even as the reality got worse, and even as we went further into debt, and even though the debt is the biggest we have ever had in our history in 1 year. That is the choice facing America. Believe the administration's rhetoric about Iraq and the economy, or elect JOHN KERRY to take care of reality.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. VAN HOLLEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RYAN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas 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 Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STRICKLAND addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### UPCOMING ELECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, last week, a number of members of the Congressional Black Caucus, myself included, addressed the issue of upcoming elections, with particular attention going to voter intimidation, oppression, and suppression. I congratulate

the Congressional Black Caucus, and particularly the leadership of our chair, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), for making Americans aware of this very serious issue.

The sad truth is that in every election since reconstruction, in every election since the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965, voters, and particularly African Americans and other minorities, have faced calculated and determined efforts at intimidation and suppression, both above and below the Mason-Dixon line, indeed throughout the Nation.

It appears that the upcoming national elections will not break that pattern. In an article on the op-ed page of Monday's Washington Post, former President Jimmy Carter states the following: "The disturbing fact is that a repetition of the problems of 2000 now seems likely, even as many other nations are conducting elections that are internationally certified to be transparent, honest, and fair."

President Carter cites two significant requirements for free and fair elections. First, standards that the State of Florida still fails to meet. The first is a nonpartisan electoral commission or a trusted and nonpartisan official who will be responsible for organizing and conducting the electoral process. And the second requirement is uniformity in voting procedures so that all citizens, regardless of their social or financial status, have equal assurance that their votes are cast in this same way and will be tabulated with equal accuracy.

Madam Speaker, as many of my colleagues know, President Carter is not speaking off the cuff when it comes to election monitoring. The world renowned Carter Center has monitored more than 50 elections around the world, many under difficult and dangerous circumstances. When it comes to certifying that elections are free and fair, the Carter Center is the gold standard. People listen and they take note.

They listen and take note, it appears, everywhere in the world but here in the United States.

President Carter is dead-on target in stating that "It is unconscionable to perpetuate fraudulent or biased electoral practices in any nation. It is especially objectionable among our Americans, who have prided ourselves on setting a global example for pure democracy."

That is why I introduced House Resolution 793, a sense of Congress resolution, condemning all efforts to suppress and intimidate voters in the United States and reaffirming that the right to vote is a fundamental right of all eligible United States citizens.

□ 2000

The resolution also urges States to replace decade-old election machinery with less error-prone equipment before the November 2004 national elections; calls upon all States to institute a

moratorium on the erection of roadblocks or identity checkpoints designed to racially profile voters on Election Day, and calls upon the Attorney General to vigorously monitor all credible allegations of voter intimidation and suppression and to expeditiously prosecute all offenders to the full extent of the law.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 793 is a simple resolution that reaffirms the most basic right of every American, the right to vote and have their vote counted. This is not a partisan issue. It is not a Democrat or Republican issue, and I would note, however, that not one single Member on the other side of the aisle has cosponsored this resolution.

Can anyone take comfort in conducting elections under flawed circumstances that depart from the principles of fair and equal treatment? Can anyone condone an election that perpetuates fraudulent or biased electoral practices? I certainly hope that our Nation's noble experiment in democracy has not.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I want to briefly address another issue of voter inequity. This past weekend I held a voter awareness workshop in my congressional district for ex-offenders. It is a model for the rest of the Nation, and I would hope that we would look to letting ex-offenders exercise their right to vote after they have served their time and paid their debt to society.

Last week, a number of members of the Congressional Black Caucus, myself included, addressed the issue of the upcoming elections, with particular attention given to voter intimidation, oppression, and suppression. I congratulate the Congressional Black Caucus, and particularly the leadership of our Chair, Congressman ELIJAH CUMMINGS, for making Americans aware of this very serious issue.

The sad truth is that in every election since Reconstruction, in every election since the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965, voters—and particularly African-Americans and other minorities—have faced calculated and determined efforts at intimidation and suppression, both above and below the Mason-Dixon Line, indeed throughout the Nation.

It appears that the upcoming national elections will not break that pattern. In an article on the op-ed page of Monday's Washington Post, former President Jimmy Carter states the following, and I quote: "The disturbing fact is that a repetition of the problems of 2000 now seems likely, even as many other nations are conducting elections that are internationally certified to be transparent, honest and fair."

President Carter cites two significant requirements for free and fair elections—standards that the State of Florida still fails to meet: The first is "a nonpartisan electoral commission or a trusted and nonpartisan official who will be responsible for organizing and conducting the electoral process"; and, the second requirement is "uniformity in voting procedures, so that all citizens, regardless of their social or financial status, have equal assurance that their votes are cast in the same way and will be tabulated with equal accuracy."

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