

The 2006 elections are nearly two years away, and Chocola is already facing MoveOn.org's ads and a flurry of automated phone calls to his constituents from an unidentified group condemning plans to change the system. Chocola, a second-term lawmaker likely to face a tough reelection in 2006, said the offensive will prove futile.

At the same time, Republican-leaning groups are readying their own ad campaigns. The Business Roundtable, which represents large corporations, is planning to spend \$15 million to \$20 million on ads and other lobbying efforts in support of Bush's plan, according to spokeswoman Johanna Schneider.

And Progress for America, a group with close ties to the White House, will spend \$250,000 next week on national cable ads to support the president's efforts.

IRAQI ELECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, as I was waiting for our time to arrive this evening listening to this previous hour, my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle started out by telling us what the President might say tomorrow night about Social Security for the 21st century. Then for 60 minutes the Democrats proceeded to use their typical scare tactics to frighten seniors just as they did last year with the issue of the prescription drug benefit for our neediest Medicare beneficiaries.

They have the prerogative to talk about anything they want to during this Democratic leadership hour, and they make a decision or their leaders decide whatever the theme du jour is going to be. After all, my colleagues, remember, our 2006 congressional elections are just around the corner. We have only got 639 days left. So let us be just as partisan and negative as we can possibly be toward President Bush and his Republican majority. That is their theme du jour. As I say, my colleagues on the other side, the Democrats and their leaders, they had a choice of topics tonight. They could have talked about anything they wanted to on this eve of what will be one of the most historic State of the Union addresses in the history of our country.

My fellow Members, for almost 2 years now, we have been in a shooting war, fighting to rid the world of terrorism, and to bring liberty and freedom to the long-suffering Iraqi people. These brave souls had an opportunity this past Sunday, just 3 days ago, January 30, to vote for the first time in their lives, indeed a vindication, a renewal of spirit, a new beginning for a great and proud people of the Middle East. I fully expect the President, and my colleagues were predicting what he might say tomorrow night, I fully expect the President to talk about this great, historic occasion.

And that, my colleagues, is what we the Republicans and our leadership have decided to talk about tonight to

the American people on the eve of the State of the Union address, to talk about the historic election that occurred in Iraq just 3 days ago. I think that is what is important to the American people. It is important to the Iraqi people. It is important to the world. And to delve down into pure, raw partisan politics at a time like this again, as I say, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle can do what they want to, but I think they missed a golden opportunity to hear some joy and good news and vindication, yes, of our efforts and the efforts of the Iraqi people over the last couple of years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the Members' attention to a couple of charts that we have here tonight. The first one, from the Los Angeles Times, Monday morning, January 31, look at it: "Iraqi Turnout Trumps Violence." Yes, there were some people killed, I think some 44. At least half of them were Iraqi security people who were trying to secure the polls and making sure the good men and women, some of them disabled, struggling to get to the polling place in Iraq, could vote and not be harmed. Look at that headline from the Los Angeles Times.

Here is another, The Washington Post, Monday, January 31: "Iraqis Defy Threats As Millions Vote." How many million? Eight million, 60 percent of the registered votes. In fact, that percentage is just as high as we had in our recent Presidential elections in many parts of this country, where we do not have to worry about getting to the polling place. We have to worry about maybe missing a son or a daughter's soccer match or being late for work, which of course we are permitted to do that on Election Day; but we certainly do not have to worry about the threat of violence or indeed losing our lives and here, 60 percent, millions, vote, 8 million people in Iraq. And expatriate Iraqis around this world in 14 different countries had an opportunity to vote on this historic occasion and in many places here in the United States as well.

So this is what we want to talk about. This is what the Republican leadership, this is what the rank-and-file Members want to talk about tonight as we celebrate and we look forward and we are so happy and grateful for the sacrifices that the Iraqi people have made for themselves and that we have made on behalf of them, and we want to commend this President for having the courage to stand strong in the face of unyielding, terrible criticism of his efforts.

□ 2115

So tonight it gives me a lot of pleasure to manage this time on behalf of the majority to talk about something that is really good and positive for this great country and for our world, certainly for the Middle East. I am so pleased that many of my colleagues on my side of the aisle have joined me in this hour, and we will be hearing from a number of them.

I want to start out by yielding to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), who serves with me on the House Committee on Armed Services, a great Member of this body who just got back from Iraq, led a small congressional delegation of members of the House Committee on Armed Services to be over there to see, to understand what the people were going through in the lead-up to these elections. At this point, I would like to let him share with us exactly what he saw on the ground in Iraq in the lead-up to these historic elections.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota, and I thank him for being with us tonight.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me and for his leadership on this and so many other issues. It has been a great pleasure to serve with the gentleman from Georgia, and I do have comments about what is truly a world historic event.

It was so exciting on Saturday and Sunday in the United States as we watched the results of the Iraqi elections to see the millions of Iraqis overcoming horrific intimidation to get to the polls and vote. I want to talk about some of that.

In the weeks and months leading up to the January 30 elections in Iraq, we were warned of plans for violent attacks, mass chaos surrounding polling places, and the improbability of any positive outcome. We heard it on the news. We heard it in briefings. And, indeed, we did see the loss of life of Iraqi citizens and members of the international alliance providing support, and we were pained. The reality was grim, but it served to underscore just how important it was to proceed with the January 30 date for legitimate elections in Iraq and the promise, the long-last promise of true freedom for the Iraqi people.

In that recent trip which the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) was discussing, I did have the opportunity and indeed the great pleasure and honor to lead a delegation. Four of my colleagues went with me to visit Afghanistan and Iraq, and it provided us with a better understanding of just how very important, in fact, critical, it was to hold fast to the January 30 date for Iraqi elections. The soldiers that we talked to, the Marines that we talked to, officer and enlisted, Iraqi leadership, the ambassador and his staff all insisted that the elections must go forward on January 30; and the reality of Sunday's success reflects just how true their calls were and how important that lesson was.

Prior to the election, there was a brutal, a brutal campaign of fear and intimidation waged by those who feared a strong and democratic Iraq. After decades of tyranny, a transition to democracy presented a challenge to the predatory environment in which these individuals thrived under Saddam Hussein. These anti-Iraqi forces, the AIF, sought to thwart democracy

in the only way they could, through violence, and this is violence almost unimaginable to us here in the United States, violence and intimidation on a scale which is beyond really our ability to conceive it. These thugs, these insurgents were taking Iraqis and pulling them out of their cars and going to their homes and killing them and killing their families. Absolutely unbelievable.

The amazing thing is, the miraculous thing is, they did not succeed. For the vast majority of Iraqi men and women and the democratic coalition of nations that provided support, of which we are a very proud member, knew the temporary violence that they endured would pale in comparison to the freedom in which these elections offered.

We were in Afghanistan before we were in Iraq, and Afghanistan is an encouraging model despite poor conditions, and Afghanistan is one of the poorest nations on earth. My notes say that they have an ailing infrastructure. That is kind. They have no infrastructure. The success of their democratic elections last fall has generated within the Afghan people a national confidence and the desire to rebuild their nation.

Under the secure protection of a unified and growingly capable national army, Afghan national army, commerce is growing. We were pleased as to see, as we drove through the streets of Kabul, that vendors were lining the streets with their shops and goods were available for sale. It is not like going to a mall, and we are the proud home of the Mall of America in Minnesota, and I guarantee my colleagues that it is nothing like that. These are little ramshackle shacks. But the Iraqis are out there. They are selling goods. Commerce is starting to open up. And that is a wonderful sign of a stable society that is on the rise.

During our discussions, President Karzai, who was very kind to give us of his time on a Friday, a holy day for the Muslims, and he came in on a Friday to meet with us and talk to us about his vision and his dreams and his hopes for his people and his confidence that his country was on the move towards more freedom and prosperity. And I want to say to my colleagues here how grateful that President Karzai was to the American people. He made a point of looking me in the eye and my colleagues and saying, "I do not think you understand that the American people know how grateful we are in Afghanistan. We know that we would not be a free country on the move to greater democracy without your help."

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, so the congressman actually had the opportunity with that delegation to visit not only Iraq but also Afghanistan and to sort of compare what it looks like a year later after free elections were held and what hopefully the Iraqi people can anticipate for themselves. He might want to elaborate on that for the Members.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would continue to yield, I think that is exactly the point, that in Afghanistan, despite the abject poverty, the lack of infrastructure, the brutality that they lived under for decades, and we forget how brutal the Taliban regime really was and how oppressive, despite those things and despite 7 years of drought, which would be crippling anywhere, we know the pain that we feel in our country when we have years of drought, the country of Afghanistan is just devastated. Even with that, the tribal warlords are coming on board with the new national government. They are turning in their arms, and we saw tanks and armored personnel carriers and missile launchers and weapons of all types that were left over from their conflict with the former Soviet Union being turned in. So if we compare it with Iraq, which is comparatively modern in its infrastructure, it is not what we would accept, but compared to Afghanistan it is striking.

We were flying around in Iraq. We would fly over big power lines, the same kinds that we have here. They just do not exist in Afghanistan. So Iraq with its mighty rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, with its extensive oil resources, with an infrastructure which is at least a start, it is in a much better position, going in position, than is in Afghanistan. So all those features and the proximity to a contemporary organized culture has really inspired the Iraqi people to step up and realize their freedom.

As the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) knows, these men and women are more than aware of the dangers that are surrounding their democratic efforts, but they believe that the promise of liberty is a worthy goal. There is a wonderful picture in the newspaper, and I saw it on television, of an Iraqi woman who is looking in the camera and raising her hand in the sign of victory with the ink, the indelible ink, on her finger that shows that she voted. We need to remember that that does not wash off. That is the purpose of the ink. And the ink on her finger identifies her as someone who defied the intimidation and went to the polls.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I would like to share with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle the poster, exactly what he was just depicting, and I think maybe we can get that up here because this is poignant. This is something that we absolutely need to make sure that each one of us focus in on. I am so glad that the gentleman from Minnesota brought that up, and I think this is the picture to which he is referring.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would continue to yield, that is it exactly, and is that not a beautiful sight? Just her bravery and her determination and that of millions of Iraqis who went to the polls in the face of an unimaginably brutal campaign of intimidation to cast their votes and take

this important step towards democracy and taking control of their own destiny.

And part of that taking control of destiny, a subject much discussed of late, is what the Iraqis are doing in taking charge of their own security. We had, as part of our visit to Iraq, the opportunity to visit with General Casey, the American commander there, and with Lieutenant General Petraeus, who is the American general who was the commanding general of the 101st Airborne in the first operation in Iraq and now is the man in charge of training the Iraqi security forces. It is very clear that he understands that they have a big job, but they are making progress, not only based on his accounts but in our discussions with American Marines and soldiers and American commanders, and their growing confidence in the ability of the Iraqi battalions and the Iraqi police who are now being well-trained and well-equipped to step up and start taking responsibility for their security.

We saw it on Election Day, did we not? The Iraqi security forces were at the polling places, and with the help of the American forces and other coalition partners who did some terrific planning going into this election, the elections were held with, yes, some brutal attacks but with an amazingly high degree of security that allowed those millions of Iraqis to go down and vote.

It is fair to say that really strict security measures were imposed for that election day. Traffic was stopped. And that led to some even more amazing stories of some Iraqis walking up to eight miles, eight miles, to vote. And, sadly, most of us are not willing to walk half a mile to vote. We want to get in the car and when we get there, if there is a line, we grumble about it. In fact, I have to admit that on our own Election Day, Vicky and I arrived at the polling place and there was a long line of people and we said, Oh, my gosh, we are going to have to wait a half hour to vote.

Mr. GINGREY. Let us come back.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity to vote for myself, so that is encouraging to make one stay in the line. But think about what these Iraqis did, how long they waited and how far they walked and what incredible pressure they were under not to vote, and yet they did. And those some 125,000 trained and equipped Iraqi forces stepped up. They voted themselves, in some very heartwarming stories, voted and then went out and took up their positions to provide security. It really is a wonderful story of a march to freedom.

I think that if I can go back and look at a quote from President Ronald Reagan, who, as my colleague knows, I had the great honor of serving in his first administration, in thinking and talking about a kind of an obstacle to freedom, the Berlin Wall, President Reagan said, "Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient

hatreds among the nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor." And I think that that is what we saw in Iraq on Sunday. Freedom was the victor.

The intimidation, the resistance, was not a barrier, it was an obstacle. And it was a tough obstacle, and the Iraqis stepped up to remove that obstacle and go in incredible numbers against incredible odds and start to take charge of their own destiny. As interim Prime Minister Allawi said, their job now is to rebuild their nation and the world is watching. And we are watching, and, frankly, Mr. Speaker, I am proud of what we are watching.

□ 2130

I am proud of what we, the American forces, and our coalition partners and allies have been able to do in working with the Iraqis; and I am just brimming over with pride and with enthusiasm and with optimism and hope for the Iraqi people; and that picture by the gentleman's side I think epitomizes that. I wish that we would not have any partisan rancor that is associated with this. We and free nations around the world ought to be dancing in the streets with joy and moving forward to do what we can to help those people take charge of their own destiny and their own freedom. I have a great deal of optimism.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I share the joy of the gentleman from Minnesota; and I commend him, and I thank him for being with us tonight, and I commend him for his service on the Committee on Armed Services and for his service to our country. He is a veteran, one of the 5 percent of the 435 Members of the Congress who served our country in the military. People serve in other ways, but I have a special place in my heart for people like the gentleman from Minnesota.

For him to come tonight and talk about what he saw in Afghanistan a year after elections, 30 percent of the voting in Afghanistan was by women, and talk about that lack of infrastructure, and then to go on to Iraq in the days leading up to the election itself and to see those Iraqi security forces working hard to try to secure, to protect these people who were having the first opportunity in their lives to vote.

Yes, there were terrorist attacks, as the gentleman points out. I think there were some 68 or 69 attacks. But do my colleagues know what? Forty-four people lost their lives and over half of them were the Iraqi security forces themselves, the police, not the people standing in line to vote.

I have been to Iraq, like the gentleman from Minnesota has, I am sure on more than one occasion. He knows that these improvised explosive devices and rocket-propelled grenades and these shoulder-mounted missiles, when these terrorists strike, they do not intend to kill less than one person per attack, and that is what happened on election day in Iraq this last Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that I have a couple of Members on our side of the aisle, a couple of additional Members who have joined me and will be talking about this historic occasion as we look forward to the President's address tomorrow night. One of my colleagues I would like to yield time to now is a dear friend and a fellow colleague on the House Committee on Armed Services, and that is the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP).

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for giving me this opportunity of taking a few moments here with my colleagues. I hope you will apologize as we talk about this historic event; I am still an old history teacher at heart, and sometimes I talk too much about it, but I see historical precedence that we sometimes forget all about.

In the late 18th century, the revolution took place in France, which ended with the overthrow of the monarchy, the beheading of the king. The Jacobins established the republic, with three goals in mind: liberty, equality, and fraternity. While this was happening, across the English Channel, in the British Parliament, Burke was watching it all unfold, and he made the statement that now the French are free to do as they please. We ought to see what it pleases them to do before we risk congratulation. As my colleagues know, before the century was done, the French Revolution had degenerated under Robespierre into the Reign of Terror, as we call it now, into which all of those noble concepts were lost in the blood of the beheadings that took place.

We sometimes do things here on the floor in which small minorities take upon themselves their rights and prerogatives which extend our debate, totally free to do as they please, but I am not so sure if the American public will always congratulate those types of occasions.

I do want, with some credit going to J. D. Crouch, from whom I have read an article, to talk about an election that I do think risks congratulations; it rises to that particular level now. I am talking obviously about a country that is far away from here, that has a culture and a language so vastly different from ours, that was led by a brutal dictatorship, a corrupt family, one man whose brutality in murdering his rivals, even relatives, is almost unparalleled; a one-party domination whose control squandered their resources and wealth, destroyed the economy; a secret police that invaded everyone's rights and terrorized people and led to ethnic violence. Of course I am talking about the country of Romania, pre-1989.

Because what we did not realize is that last year, there was an election in Romania, where the Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase, lost the election and peacefully transferred power to the opposition leader, Traian Basescu. I apologize for not knowing how to pro-

nounce that name because, quite frankly, it was not in the news. I do not have any news reports of people trying to properly pronounce his name, because this election in Romania was so blase, we did not even cover it; we did not even talk about it. It just simply seemed to happen.

We can make some vast parallels between Romania pre-1989 and Iraq in 2003. Romania had the Communist Party, whereas Iraq was dominated by the Ba'athist Party, a brutal dictator in Hussein versus a brutal dictator in Ceausescu. The Fedayeen Saddam of the secret police was similar to Romania's Securitate. The Kurds and the Sunnis, who were ethnically abused similar to many of the Hungarians and the natives in Romania at that time. It is true, I will admit, that Slovakia and Moldavia did not send all sorts of rebels across the border to try and stir up ethnic violence, but they did in the 1990s have significant clashes where bloody miners attacked peaceful demonstrations, and the result of the world to that was to meet it with both patience and support for their efforts of moving towards a democracy.

Fifteen years later, Romania now still has some effect of a one-party state, but they are moving away from that as new Romanians are coming back into the country who were trained in the West and are bringing a spirit of entrepreneurship with them. There is still some element of the communist corruption, but no longer do people think in Romania that it is the grease of commerce, and there are tough laws against it. Fifteen years later, Romania is a strong democratic nation and a powerful friend of ours as a member of NATO.

We need to not forget in the history of this world, it took 7 years after World War II to have the first election in Japan, and 4 years after World War II to have the first election in Germany. We have done the same thing in Afghanistan in 18 months. The first election that showed clearly to the world that most of Iraq is not in chaos, that that small lens of the camera has to focus in on the picture so you do not see a full view of what is happening over there. It showed that al-Zarqawi is not a leader.

We had a Member who serves in this building, not necessarily in this particular body, who said our military and the insurgents are fighting for the same thing: the hearts and minds of the people. I have to reject that. That is an inaccurate analysis. We are not fighting for the same thing. Those fighting to destroy democracy coming to Iraq are the Ba'athist Party seeking a return to power. It is very similar as George Will in one of his articles quoted "1984," George Orwell where he describes the government as the boot stomping on a human face forever. That is what the Ba'athists would like to return to Iraq.

The other is al-Zarqawi which is a radical rejection of the idea that government derives legitimacy from the

consent of the governed. It is a concept of popular sovereignty that Western traditions accept as the basis of our government as something he still thinks of as an evil principle. His rage would have the same effect, a different kind of boot, but still on the face of the people forever. Those insurgents are not fighting for the hearts and minds of the people; they are fighting for chaos and terror and pure political control.

The hearts and the minds of the people are those who went to the polls on Sunday and voted, like the 32-year-old Samir Hassan who said, I would have crawled here if I had to, to the first vote ever held in his country; and he used that phrase because he had one of his legs blown off in a car bomb prior to the election. And then he went on to say, I do not want terrorists to kill other Iraqis like they tried to kill me. So much for the idea that Arabs do not want democracy.

Freedom is the antidote for terrorism. The Iraqis have had a defining moment and the good guys, those who went out to vote, they won. What we now must give Iraq is the same thing we gave to Romania 15 years ago: patience, international support. Despite any smug predictions to the contrary, we are moving in Iraq at a faster pace toward a truly new style of government in which people count; not power, but people count. And with an eye to that future, with an eye to that future, I think the election in Iraq is one that rises to the level where we can risk congratulation.

I thank the gentleman from Georgia for allowing me to share this time with him.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Utah, my good friend, for joining us tonight and for bringing some historical perspective. Absolutely, once a history teacher, always a history teacher; but I would say tonight to my colleagues, we are talking about a world-class history teacher, and he gave us a good lesson in Romanian history. I am standing up here listening to my colleague, and yes, I have long since forgotten they went through this struggle less than 15 years ago, in talking about of course the French Revolution and the fact that something historic happened on Sunday.

But there is a lot more work to be done, as the gentleman from Utah so clearly pointed out. We are not through, and for us to listen to naysayers as we had to listen throughout this entire recent Presidential and congressional election cycle, about declare victory and come home even if you have not won. Look for an exit strategy. Bring the troops home. Give us a day. How many? What day? This is totally wrong, and I really appreciate the gentleman bringing that to our attention tonight.

We have been joined as well by my colleague, the gentlewoman from the great State of Tennessee (Mrs.

BLACKBURN), and she is a passionate Member of this body and works very intently for the people of her State and her district and for this great country. It is a privilege tonight for me to recognize her and thank her for being with us.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you so much to the gentleman from Georgia for taking the time to bring this issue not only to the Members of this body, but to the American people. Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the gentleman from Georgia for taking the time to bring this incredible photograph to the floor and let us continue to just feast our eyes on the contentment and the joy that is expressed in this Iraqi woman's face as she has dipped her finger in that blue ink which has become the indelible mark of freedom, which shows the world that she, as a free woman, has exercised her right to vote. I thank the gentleman for that.

Because we watched this take place, and what an incredible display it was as we saw the Iraqi people stand and fight back terrorism and to rejoice in the work that they have done. The entire nation rejoiced. Our military men and women rejoiced with them, and I think the entire world has gathered to offer praise and congratulations.

At the same time, it was amazing as this took place to listen to some of the liberal leaders in Washington and around and about talk about how important it was to not overhype these first elections. The gentleman from Utah provided some wonderful perspective to that.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand why those on the left and some of those that have harangued the President for months would start to feel as if they are feeling some political heat because, indeed, I think they are. They were wrong. They were wrong. They had too little faith in America, they had too little faith in our military men and women, and they had too little faith in the Iraqi people and the power and the desire for freedom and what that would do in their country.

Some of those liberals like to say that Iraq was out of control and that the terrorists would destroy the election, and America was losing and that we should postpone the elections. Certainly, some like Senator KENNEDY even called for an almost immediate withdrawal of American forces. They wanted us to tell the world that the United States did not have the strength and the determination to defeat terrorism, and they were wrong in every instance. This President stood tall. Our Armed Forces did not waiver. The American people refused to yield to tyrants and terrorists, and we watched the Iraqi people refuse to yield to tyrants and terrorists and the pressures.

□ 2145

Today we know that our President was right. Despite all the doom and

gloom and despite the constant focus on every single failure that could have possibly taken place in Iraq, despite seeing those "two steps forward and one step back" as we marched towards success, we somehow managed to hold safe and orderly elections in Iraq. And I think that tells us all something. It tells me that the national media had already decided in their minds that Iraq was not going like it ought to go, and they reported everything and anything that they thought could make it look like it was going to be hopeless. They ignored every little single shining success. They thought that they could ignore it. They ignored progress and heroism and they had their version of what they thought they wanted Iraq to be. They were against the war, and they manipulated coverage to suit their personal views.

Thankfully, the American people did not believe that national media. They stuck with the President, and today the Iraqi people are seeing what freedom means. Today we know that America has struck a demoralizing blow against terrorism. We are taking valuable territory from the terrorists. They no longer have an assured safe haven in either Afghanistan or Iraq.

Pakistan is working with us to track terrorists. Libya has even begun seeking diplomatic relations with the United States.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 2 years I have had the opportunity to be in Iraq and to make friends with some folks in Iraq, and it is amazing. We have had some of these women come here to America as we have been there to visit with them. Some of these I e-mail with frequently, and we have shared our vision for what an alliance can be between our nations. Other Members of this body have joined in working with some of these folks. It has been absolutely extraordinary. It would have been unthinkable 4 years ago, and this is how we are going to win the war on terrorism, is building these relationships.

In the hours just after the election, I received several e-mail messages from some of my Iraqi friends, one in particular from an Iraqi woman who ran for Congress, and I would like for you all to just listen to this for a moment.

It says, "Dear American Friends, a warm hug of appreciation from Iraq to the good hearts in the United States. Congratulations for us and for you on Iraqi Elections Day.

"Today we are not only free but we have stood united in democracy. Today we marked our history with bright words of Winning the War Against Terror Against Dictatorship. Today we won our identity in front of a watching world. Today Iraq is for us and we are for Iraq, while yesterday Iraq was Saddam and Saddam was Iraq.

"Today Iraq is for all: Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkomans and many others, while yesterday we were all looking for a home of dignity, humanity and peace.

“After all this, just tell me how can I say thank you. Thank you for every spirit you have given from families and friends to Iraq. Thank you for every minute you contributed from your life to Iraq. Thank you for every word of support, for every courage moment. Thank you for every aid, every project, every rebuild. Thank you for being the best friend Iraq ever had. Thank you on behalf of or tortured men and women in the prisons of Saddam.

“Thank you on behalf of all Iraqi innocents who have given their lives for the freedom price. Thank you on behalf of next generation of love and peace in the Middle East. Thank you and a warm hug from Iraq to the brave hearts in America.”

Mr. Speaker, that message is for all of us. It is for our country, it is for our President, and it is an absolutely beautiful thing. I know some of those across the aisle will continue to criticize our every move in Iraq; and, sadly, much of that criticism comes from the powerful leaders of the left. But to my colleagues across the aisle who know better, speak up, challenge your leadership, work with us in Iraq rather than against us.

To our allies in Iraq, America says a hearty congratulations. We are ready to stand by your side as you rebuild. We will not cut and run. America looks forward to your help as an ally in the war on terror.

Mr. Speaker, God bless our active duty, our Reserve and our National Guard men and women as they work to protect us all over the world tonight.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) and I sincerely appreciate her sharing that poignant testimonial, that anecdote from the Iraqi woman voting in those elections and what they wanted to share with the American people and to say not a simple but an elaborate thank you, a deep, heartfelt thank you. I really appreciate the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) sharing that with us, and I thank her for being with us this evening.

It is truly amazing that our friends on the other side of the aisle spent one hour, the previous hour, of course, the determination of what they talk about just as our subject matter is made by our leadership. And their leadership decided, well, this was the great opportunity to attack the President on Social Security for the 21st century. They spent an entire hour and not one word, not a single word about this historic election, free elections in the Middle East for the first time in hundreds or maybe thousands of years. And certainly none of these people that had that opportunity, some of them literally stepping over pools of blood to get to that ink, to put on their finger that indelible ink, as my colleagues pointed out, that will not wash off, will not go away.

It was a way to make sure that people voted once and only once and ev-

erything was secure. These people, not only were their lives at stake before they got to the polling place and while they were waiting in line, queuing up sometimes waiting hour after hour in the hot sun, in dust, in misery, waiting to vote, but then they dipped that finger in that indelible ink, knowing that for at least 2 days, maybe longer, there was no way they could get that off their finger. So they are putting their lives at risk even after the fact, but they did not care because they are brave, courageous, wonderful people, and I am extremely proud of them.

I am disappointed that our friends on the other side of the aisle went 60 minutes without not one comment. They do not have to praise President Bush or the Republican majority or this leadership, but to not spend one word talking about what the Iraqi people did 3 days ago is just beyond any imagination.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand here tonight and manage this time, and we do have one additional speaker before we get into conclusion and I do want to hear from the gentleman from Texas, but I just want to say, share with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, some of the thoughts that I have had since this historic happening this past Sunday.

We all represent maybe 630 or so thousand people in our districts across this great country; 435 of us who are Members of this body, this House of Representatives. And we have all suffered and our people have suffered, mainly our young soldiers men and women who have been in harm's way, Marines, soldiers, sailors, airmen, some 1,600 maybe, close to 1,600 now, who were killed in action and others that we have gone and we have seen. Sometimes we visit them in theater, dying with them, or talking to them or maybe been out to Bethesda to see them struggling to recover from their injuries, proud that they have served this country and served it well.

And I cannot help but think about three soldiers in my district, the 11th of Georgia, West Georgia, and its 17 counties. There have been more injured, but there are three that lost their lives in this conflict. I have been thinking about them for the last couple of days, as I am sure my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have reflected on the families, the loved ones from the funerals that they have attended over the last year and a half as we have paid this great sacrifice on behalf of the Iraqi people and freedom in this great world that we live in as the President talked about in his inaugural address just the other day.

And I want to mention them. I want to mention them because I do not want to ever forget them. I do not want us to ever forget them. I want to think about them. I want to think about their faces. I want to think about the face of Command Sergeant Major Eric Cooke, whose uncle lives up in Calhoun, Georgia, in Gordon County just on the outskirts of my district, who, after serving almost 30 years this country in con-

flict, in battles in several venues, gave his life on Christmas Eve 2003, two days after I visited with him in theater.

He went on a mission in a Humvee, and he took the shrapnel that probably was intended for somebody else, and he gave his life for this great country.

I want to think about specialist Justin Johnston from Rome, Georgia, Floyd County, 19 years old when he joined the Army, barely 21 years old when he lost his life on Easter Sunday last year. And I think about Janet and Joe, his parents, his brother Josh and people that have paid this sacrifice and what did they give it for? What did their sons and daughters give up their lives for?

Last but not least, I think about First Lieutenant Tyler Brown. Lieutenant Tyler Brown, president of the student body at my alma mater, the Georgia Institute of Technology, just a few years ago, 26 years old at the time of his death, killed by a sniper in Iraq, just 2 weeks after being redeployed there from the demilitarized zone. No picnic. But Tyler Brown gave his life. He was a wonderful young man. His parents, I think about them. I see their faces as I stand here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I think about these people. I know that they have the comfort of knowing as well that their sons and daughters did not die in vain. I mention these three. There are many others. My colleagues, maybe they have there, maybe they have been to more funerals than I have been and seen more mayhem, but this is seared in my memory, and it always will be. When you go to Arlington, when you visit as a tourist, it is one thing, but when you go to Arlington to watch a young soldier whose family you knew and represented laid to rest, who died for our country, this is something of a totally different story.

That is why I am proud. I am proud to talk about this tonight, and I am proud of these young men and women who have done this for us and served us so well. So that is what I want my colleagues to think about.

Let me, before we use up all of our time, Mr. Speaker, and I get too carried away, I do want to introduce another Member on our side of the aisle, a new Member, a gentleman from the great State of Texas, a judge, a fine judge, a member of the appellate branch of the judiciary who might be a freshman Member, but he has got a lot of experience and a lot of things to share with us tonight, not only on this issue that we have been talking about for the last 45 minutes but also a point that is very near and dear to his heart as well.

I proudly yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT).

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the right honorable gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGERY). I consider it a privilege to call him a friend and colleague; and I appreciate the time, Mr. Speaker, to address a couple of issues here together.

First of all, we know 2 days ago the cradle of civilization took initial steps towards becoming a democracy. Citizens of Iraq, which today includes parts of the former Mesopotamia and Babylon, cast ballots as free people to elect their own leaders. We must join the rest of the world and salute the extraordinary courage it took for these people to cast their votes.

Each of them had to endure adverse conditions and the threats of death to go to the polls, stand in line and let their voices be heard. The people of America and the free world should be inspired. As with the words paraphrased from *Les Miserables*, "We should hear their spirits sing as it is the music of a people who will not be slaves again."

□ 2200

They have joined in the fight that secures them the right to be free. These brave souls have ventured out in sheer defiance of terrorists and insurgents who want to harm them and keep them enslaved. I join the rest of the world as we salute them, the brave voters of Iraq.

In sharp contrast, right here in this democratic Republic, where hundreds of thousands have sacrificed their lives and millions more have sacrificed so much to secure our right to be a free people, we have a group of Democratic Senators who know the sacrifice it took to secure that right and obligation. They know the words they spoke in an oath sworn to God, with history and citizens watching, to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. They know the Constitution mandates they vote on the nominations to Federal courts, those nominations made by the President. Yet they fail and refuse to do their sworn obligations, and it is as if they never intended to keep their oaths when they were sworn.

Not only has this group intentionally failed to follow their sworn oaths, they have taken the job of questioning good, honorable and decent people and turned it into abusive inquisitions. These Senators would never tolerate these unfair inquisitions if they were treated in the same manner. Many of these nominees have pulled themselves up by the bootstraps and have worked hard to become the top in their field. There are nominees who have lived ethical, moral, honorable lives; yet they are brutalized and had their lives publicly smeared and demeaned in the most vile and disgusting manner.

In the ancient Roman Empire, Christians were thrown to the lions, but many were at least allowed to fight back. When a conservative or a moderate Christian Hispanic or African American nominee is dragged before the Democratic Senators' inquisition, they are not allowed to fight back. These are nominees who have never been accused of cheating in college or plagiarizing speeches or surgically changing their appearance or being in-

involved in the death of fellow party-goers. These are decent people who are who they are and who they appear to be, and they deserve better treatment.

These folks have not lied under oath by completely refusing to do their sworn duty. These nominees have simply agreed to subject themselves to the torture chamber of the certain Democratic Senators in order to try to help this Nation. The judicial nominees only wish to help the Nation without legislating from the bench, and they believe in the true intentions of our Founders.

Having been a district judge and a chief justice, I know some of the nominees that the President has made over the years. They have been attacked and stymied, and I believe what has been done to them is simply unconscionable. Were the attacks made out in the civilian sector, those nominees, some of them, would certainly be entitled to huge verdicts by juries who would understand the malice.

Some nominees have had their lives put on hold for years while some Democratic Senators not only refuse to follow their oath but do all they can to block others from keeping their oaths. When one Democratic Senator was chairman of the Judiciary Committee in 1992, the average length of time to get a vote before the Senate after being nominated was basically very short months. This same Senator wrote to nominees saying basically he would not play politics with their nominations. Then he turned right around and played politics, dragged out such hearings and votes for nearly a year, at which time the nominations died when the President was defeated in November 1992.

Now those certain Democrats have effectively prevented votes on qualified nominees such as that of Priscilla Owen, Carolyn Kuhl, Charles Pickering, Miguel Estrada, Henry Saad, David McKeague and Terrance Boyle, not for months but for years. Those were all nominated, and I mentioned, in 2001. Miguel Estrada could wait no longer and finally had to withdraw. In fact, my law school classmate, Justice Priscilla Owen, was one of those who was nominated for the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. That was on May 9, 2001, and then she was coldly and callously left without the constitutionally required vote for over 3½ years.

I have some Democratic friends back home who understand truth and fairness, and right and wrong; and that is why these actions of certain people have hurt not only this country; they have hurt their party.

Please understand, when an attorney is nominated for the bench, clients are normally reluctant to send new cases their way. When judges are nominated, there is a reluctance by colleagues to send involved cases to them because they may not be around to finish them. The nominees are normally reluctant to make major purchases or make decisions about schools for their children

because of all of the uncertainty. These qualified individuals who are ready and willing to serve their country have theirs and their families' lives put on indefinite hold.

When the average length from nomination to vote was just a matter of months, that was not a major problem. It is now a critical problem. Nominees' lives are incarcerated in an unfair and unnecessary purgatory. Some Senators have complained about how long we held brutal and threatening terrorists, yet these same Senators uphold the honorable judicial nominees' lives as a matter of routine.

These handful of Senators often act out as brutal lions hiding behind the safety of their perches where they cannot be attacked by their victims. Then they maul and brutalize their victims and leave them and their families in a suspended animation for years. It is high time they were held accountable for such outrageous conduct. I believe we have begun seeing recently in this country in the last election some Senators pay for their abusiveness.

It is my intention to begin a judicial observance at least once a month from the floor of this House until all the previous nominees from the President's last term who are renominated are all voted on.

May God grant peace and certainty to those to whom these Senators are persecuting or made to suffer some for their religious beliefs.

In conclusion, some may want to fire shots across my bow. That is fine. So long as they quit attacking good decent nominees and give them their vote.

May the still small voice of fairness and conscience that has been stifled for far too long finally be heard in the soul of the prosecuting Senators. May those who are too afraid to vote take inspiration and courage from the brave Iraqis who ventured out to vote despite the threats on their own lives.

I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) for yielding.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas. The gentleman obviously speaks with passion and knows of what he speaks, and I suspect that we will be hearing more from him on this issue as we go forward in the 109th Congress because it certainly clearly needs to be addressed, and the time tonight, of course, is in the context of talking about freedom, talking about liberty, talking about the rule of law and what we are trying to share with the Iraqi people and other oppressed people of the Middle East and other parts of the world and other Arab nations who have not yet felt that fresh smell of liberty and democracy. So I thank the gentleman for joining us tonight and speaking so eloquently.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to mention a couple of quotes that mean a lot to me, mean a lot to everybody who has ever heard them, mean a lot to this great country, mean a lot to Great Britain, but first of all, this one.

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants, Thomas Jefferson, November 13, 1787. The blood of patriots indeed and the blood of tyrants indeed, and this is what we are talking about.

This is a sacrifice that the Iraqi people have made on behalf of themselves and what we have been making on behalf of them over these nearly 2 years now as we have sacrificed our sons and daughters.

The other quote: Democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others that have ever been tried. Of course, Sir Winston Churchill. We are sharing, and that is what the President talked about during his inauguration address on January 20. That is what we are talking about, sharing. That is what he will talk about tomorrow night.

God bless you, Mr. President, and God bless America.

DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to be sitting here listening to these fine presentations. I believe that these folks that are still watching this evening are truly privileged to hear the kinds of concerns that have been expressed and, I think, the words that have been so eloquently provided to us this evening about our efforts in Iraq.

However, sitting there it does seem to me to be kind of interesting to think about all the people who we know are not feeling all that well about what has happened, all the folks around the world who watched the election on Sunday and thought, oh, Brother, now what are we going to do.

This is not good news to a lot of folks. Certainly, I guess President Chirac, many of the French people themselves, the French Government, Michael Moore, other members of the looney left in California and Hollywood, Barbra Streisand, the Syrians and Al Jazeera and Osama bin Laden and Dan Rather and many parts of the United Nations, the Baathists in Iraq. There are a whole bunch of people who are upset about what happened, and we tend to think of them as being peculiar in many ways or at least that they are folks who are so far out in the left that their opinions are completely and totally skewed by their political ideology. That is true; that is the case.

I was struck just the other day by something that happened in Colorado, my home State, where a professor at the University of Colorado, a tenured professor who was the chair of the ethnic studies department, in and of itself I think a questionable line of academic inquiry, but nonetheless something

that the University of Colorado saw fit to confer that kind of status upon, having an actual Department of Ethnic Studies, and this gentleman, the chairman of that department by the name of Ward Churchill made some comments that were picked up as a result of the fact that he was going to be speaking at a college in New York State, Hamilton College, and his comments were repeated in the media in the last couple of days.

Among other things, what Mr. Churchill, this professor, a tenured professor at the University of Colorado, said was that the people who worked and died in the World Trade Towers were "little Eichmanns" because they were part of this huge bureaucracy of trade and that they were facilitating essentially the engine of world capitalism, which to him made them "little Eichmanns."

I mean, this is a guy, remember, who holds a position of academic authority, who is paid a handsome salary; and if we look at his own academic background, we come away wondering how he ever got hired at any university, let alone the flagship institution, University of Colorado. He may have someplace, somewhere gotten a job teaching at a middle school that was in dire need of a social studies professor, but one cannot imagine when they look at his background that he could actually get a position like the one he holds.

□ 2215

Now he went on to say that, "True, these people were citizens of a sort. But innocent?" He said, "Innocent? Give me a break."

They deserved to die. Those are the words I am adding here. They deserved to die. I guess he was saying they were not innocent and we should not, therefore, be concerned about the fact that 3,000 or more died in that event.

A lot of people in the State of Colorado have called for him to resign; others have called for the University of Colorado to dismiss him. Of course, that is not going to happen. We know no university today would dismiss someone for saying something so incredibly ludicrous or outrageous. And if they did, of course, he would sue. He would go to court and claim that he has a right to say what he has said because he is exercising his first amendment rights. And then they would talk about the fact that he has tenure and he is protected under that situation.

And in a way, I agree. In a way, I think it is right. In fact, I have chosen not to join the chorus of those people who are demanding that he be removed. I think what Mr. Churchill offers to us is a great example of what we on the conservative side of the aisle here and the conservative side of American politics have been talking about for a long time as a problem in our university system, in the halls of academe in general. They have been taken over by the looney left.

Mr. Churchill is a perfect example of the looney left. He is perhaps the loo-

niest of the looney left and so, therefore, I want him to continue to speak out. I like listening to him. I hate what he has to say, but I like the fact that people are seeing and judging for themselves what is happening in our institutions of higher education, because he is an example. He is an example not just of what is happening at the University of Colorado or even in the major institutions in the United States. He is an example of a philosophy that permeates those halls of academe. It is a hatred of America, down deep, a hatred for everything we are and everything we stand for that he exemplifies.

And it is the same thing with all the people I mentioned earlier who look at what happened on Sunday and down deep they feel very, very, very worried, very upset. They cannot really get over the fact that the seeds of democracy were planted in Iraq. They were even nourished by the blood of many wonderful American servicemen and women and certainly by the blood of thousands and thousands of Iraqi citizens.

They were hopeful that, in fact, we would fail, that the whole experiment would fail. They were hopeful that we could not claim any degree of moral superiority, that we could not claim the high ground, the moral high ground, because, in a way, they hate America. They hate the institutions we have established. They hate the freedom that we enjoy. They hate the economic system that we have established. They hate George Bush. They hate the political party he represents.

The other day, I understand that the individual running for the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee said "I hate Republicans and everything they stand for." Hate. Howard Dean. Well, I wonder how Mr. Dean felt. I wonder how he felt down deep. I wonder even how JOHN KERRY felt down deep.

I wonder how some of our colleagues here in the House felt when they saw that the seeds had been planted, they were sprouting and that democracy has a chance, that it may in fact spread throughout the Middle East, that it is possible. We can now begin to hope for it in a way we could not have dreamt about a year ago and that the President's idea about the basic nature of man is right.

Rousseau, long ago, stated, "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains." And this essence that there is something in every human being, and the President has spoken of this very eloquently and forcefully on many occasions, that there is something in every human being that strives and yearns for freedom. Yet we look around the world and we see so many people who are incapable of achieving it because of the governmental system that is imposed upon them.

Maybe that is, in fact, a great threat to the United States, as the President has said. Regardless, the fact is that on