

I am proud of the students in Florida's Sixth Congressional District for their hard work and their skill. Being in a marching band is strenuous enough, but central Florida with all its heat adds an extra impediment to the challenge. Job well done.

□ 1015

WEAKENED ETHICS RULES: NO WONDER REPUBLICANS ARE SO CONFIDENT

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, what are House Republicans afraid of? True, there are constant newspaper reports about a member of the Republican leadership participating in questionable activities dealing with Washington lobbyists, trips overseas and questionable financial dealings. However, if Republicans are so confident that these activities do not constitute a breaking of the House rules, why have the Republicans made it virtually impossible for the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct to do its job?

Earlier this year, the Republicans weakened the ethics rules. Under the new Republican rules, if a majority of the committee cannot determine whether or not an investigation should proceed after 45 days of receiving a complaint, it would simply be dropped. Under the old bipartisan ethics rules, a subcommittee was created after the 45-day deadline to investigate the ethics charges.

It is no wonder Republican leaders are so confident. If they keep their Republican troops on the committee in line, they do not have to worry about an investigation. And this is no way to run an ethics committee. It is time that House Republicans join the Democrats in rejecting these new rules in favor of fair, bipartisan rules that restore confidence to the House ethics process.

F/A-22

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the F/A-22 Raptor, one of the most important weapons the Air Force has in its fight to protect our country.

On Friday the Pentagon approved the F/A-22 for full-rate production. I am glad the Pentagon is recognizing what we have known all along: the Raptor is a superior and essential weapon for our Air Force.

It is our duty in Congress to ensure the safety of every American, and fully funding the F/A-22 goes a long way toward that end. Our bloated and bureaucratic government offers many opportunities to reduce spending and balance

the budget. But our Nation's defense is not the place to cut funds. The F/A-22 will let the United States military continue dominating our adversaries.

To prepare for tomorrow's threats, we need to fund these planes today. Mr. Speaker, I ask the Members to join me in supporting the F/A-22 program.

WEAKENED ETHICS RULES: ETHICS COMMITTEE NOW A SHELL

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

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, on January 4, 2005, the first day of the 109th Congress, this House adopted several changes to the House ethics rules that many in this body warned would severely weaken the ability of the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct to enforce the highest standards of ethical conduct in its Members, officers, and employees.

In the middle of March, these warnings, sadly, came to pass when the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct failed to adopt committee rules that would have given it the ability to investigate credible allegations of misconduct even in cases where partisan considerations caused the committee to be deadlocked.

Now we are left with a shell of a committee, a paper tiger that can perform only a fraction of the advisory, enforcement, and investigatory duties assigned it.

The absence of a functioning ethics committee and the collapse of the ethics enforcement process are untenable, unacceptable, and irresponsible. In the eyes of the American people, this can only serve to undermine the integrity and credibility of the Members of the House and the House as institution.

CLARENCE GAINES

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay my respects to Coach Clarence "Big House" Gaines, who passed away on Monday April 18, 2005. Coach Gaines was a college basketball icon, having guided the Winston-Salem State University Rams to an amazing 828 wins during his 47 seasons at Winston-Salem State University. His record of success places him fifth on the NCAA career coaching wins list, just behind Dean Smith, Adolph Rupp, Bob Knight, and Jim Phelean.

Under Coach Gaines's leadership, the Winston-Salem State Rams won 11 CIAA titles and became the first predominantly black college to ever win an NCAA basketball title.

Coach Gaines was inducted into many halls of fame and was named CIAA Coach of the Year several times. He was also named NCAA Coach of the Year in 1967.

Coach Gaines was a truly remarkable man, and he will be missed. My condolences go out to his wife, Clara, and his two children.

NORTHEAST REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, this week a tripartisan group of original co-sponsors has joined together to reintroduce our bill to create a Northeast Regional Economic Development Commission to invest in the most distressed areas of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York.

Economic development commissions are now in existence in Alaska; Mississippi; the Midwest; and, of course, Appalachia; among other places. These bodies have a proven track record of success. For example, since its creation, the ARC has cut the number of distressed counties in their region in half.

Today, when one looks at the statistics, the border region of the Northeast has just as strong a need as the other areas. We need direct Federal investments to turn our economies around. Our bill does that and ensures both local planning and the advancement of regional goals like sustainable land use.

We are proud to have such a strong tripartisan group working together to promote economic development in the Northeast. We look forward to advancing our bill and working with other regions who want to grow their economies and bring prosperity back.

ENERGY POLICY

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

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, in recent months Americans have been struggling to cope with rising gas prices. And today the Republican majority and the U.S. House of Representatives bring forward a comprehensive, a comprehensive, energy program.

And let me tell the Members this: we need to have a comprehensive energy program so that we can avoid losing jobs due to high energy costs.

This week it is a comprehensive energy bill that will drastically reduce the costs of energy. It will lower energy prices for consumers, revitalize our economy, and create jobs. That is because the money that was diverted to high energy costs can now go to goods and services; and most importantly, this bill will reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

Mr. Speaker, our opponents on the other side of the aisle have only given blather. They have only given bluster. They have not offered a comprehensive policy. We today are going to offer a comprehensive energy policy to help

all Americans and reduce the cost of gasoline.

NATIONAL WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT'S SPIRIT AWARDS

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

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, the National Wheelchair Basketball Association is the largest and oldest wheelchair sports organization in the world. Established over 50 years ago, the NWBA has provided opportunities for people with physical disabilities, including children and disabled veterans, to play the game of basketball.

The NWBA runs on generosity and volunteers; and one of those volunteers is Harry Vines of Sherwood, Arkansas, who has served as president since 2001. Harry is known in Arkansas for many volunteer activities, most significantly as coach of the Arkansas Rollin' Razorbacks, a five-time national championship wheelchair basketball team that he helped found in 1978. A high school All American basketball player at Central High School in Little Rock, Harry played at Oklahoma City University before returning to Arkansas as a coach and later a rehab counselor and administrator.

Harry and the NWBA award, the NWBA Spirit Awards, recognize the work of outstanding volunteers and organizations that support the NWBA. The 2005 Spirit Award recipients include long-time UT-Arlington Jim Hayes, Bluegrass Invitational Tournament director Evelyn Bologna, Division III chairman Tim Stout, and the University of Illinois' Wheelchair Sports Program.

Congratulations to all of these outstanding individuals.

PASS DR-CAFTA

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe, but it was 2 long decades ago that we saw tyranny in Central America bring war and turmoil to our doorstep. Today, through U.S. assistance and the resolve of our neighbors to the south, civil war has been replaced by burgeoning democracies and free markets. Chaos has been replaced with the growing prevalence of the rule of law. Rather than a growing national security threat, this region has become an increasingly reliable partner in the war on terror, drug interdiction, and migration control. As fellow democracies, we are bound together by geography and a common commitment to liberty.

With the Dominican Republic Central American Free Trade Agreement, we have an opportunity to solidify this success and lock in the tremendous political and economic progress that has

been made. President Bush has made it clear that advancing the cause of freedom and liberty is central to our foreign policy goals. Passage of the DR-CAFTA will be a significant step forward in ensuring that the institutions of democracy and political pluralism are firmly entrenched throughout this hemisphere.

WEAKENED ETHICS RULES: WHO ARE THEY TRYING TO PROTECT?

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this year, the House Republican leadership has worked to undermine the ethics process here. First, the leadership floated an ethics proposal that would have allowed Members of its leadership to continue to serve in leadership if they were indicted. When that did not go over too well, the leadership decided it could protect one of its own by making it more difficult to investigate unethical behavior. The leadership rushed through a new rule that would end an ethics complaint after 45 days if no agreement could be reached on how to proceed. Under the old rules, if the two parties could not come to an agreement, a subcommittee was automatically appointed to investigate.

Finally, to guarantee that Republican leadership would be able to quash any ethic complaints, they purged the committee of three members, including the chairman, who were not always willing to toe the party line. Then they replaced them with party loyalists.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican leadership is going to extreme measures to weaken our ethics rules. It makes one wonder just whom they are trying to protect. Ethics and morals have been overtaken by hypocrisy.

CONGRESS UNDER REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I was elected to Congress just a little over 2 years ago, and our economy was in tough shape when I got in Congress. I did not really realize how tough a shape it was in. But under the leadership of this House, the leadership of the Speaker, the majority leader, we have worked on the problems of high unemployment, the low stock market. We made the tough choices and invested in our economy in 2003, and the result was a significant job growth.

Now in this Congress we have taken on additional good work. We have passed a highway bill, class action reform, bankruptcy reform. And this week, Mr. Speaker, we are going to work on our energy bill. This is important and timely legislation. Every member on our committee was heard

on their concerns. Every amendment was made in order and voted on, most on a roll call vote; and the bill passed out of committee with bipartisan support.

We had an energy bill 2 years ago, and that energy bill unfortunately was derailed by a procedural motion in the other body, and it was largely derailed by trial lawyers who felt that they were not getting their just desserts from the energy bill. Mr. Speaker, that is why it was outrageous to read in "Roll Call" yesterday that the senior vice president of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America said that they were upset with the asbestos bill over in the other body and it may have an impact on fund-raising from this particular bar.

Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous. Where are the calls for investigation? Where are the calls for ethics from the other body?

SRI LANKA

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, during the recess, I was privileged to visit the country of Sri Lanka where there exists tension and sometimes open warfare between the government and the Tamilians.

Fortunately, partially as a result of the tsunami, there is a cease fire. I trust that the cease fire will continue, that a peaceful accord will be reached. But in the meantime, I would urge that we do everything within our power to make sure that relief resources are equally and fairly deployed throughout all areas of the country that were, in fact, affected. There is a tremendous resolve to try and arrive at peace. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we will help.

TAKE POLITICS OUT OF THE ETHICS PROCESS

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, we need to ask ourselves every now and then in a moment of truth on a bipartisan basis what this House is doing. Ethics rules should be there to prosecute somebody who has broken them. The same rules should be there to protect somebody who is innocent.

The Democrat members on the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct do not want to meet. They do not want to give the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) due process. They do not want to give him an up-or-down vote. They are very content to discuss it with their allies at The Washington Post or the New York Times. They do not want to talk about how many educational trips they have been on with their families, although there is a list. They do not want to talk about how