

Too many of our Senators, too many of our House Members voted for these trade agreements that outsourced jobs, these job-killing trade agreements that devastate our communities. When places like Mansfield and Chillicothe and Portsmouth and Zanesville and Lima lose these kinds of industrial manufacturing jobs, they hurt our schools, they mean fewer police on the street, they mean weaker fire protection, they mean hardship for our families.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that Members of Congress stood up and quit passing these job-killing trade agreements.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

#### THE FEDERAL CONSENT DECREE FAIRNESS ACT

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to talk about the Federal Consent Decree Fairness Act that I hope we see on the floor during this Congress. Mr. GARRETT from New Jersey and Mr. BISHOP from Utah and other members of the Congressional Constitution Caucus are also speaking on behalf of this important legislation tonight. I would also like to thank the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER), who is the lead cosponsor of this legislation along with me.

I am pleased to be the sponsor of the Federal Consent Decree Fairness Act. I would like to start by explaining what it is not about. This bill is not about reining in an activist judiciary or about ending consent decrees. This legislation is about increasing the responsibility and accountability of elected officials. This is really focused on what elected officials are elected to do.

Consent decrees are too often used by elected officials as an excuse not to solve the problems they have been elected to solve. The principal goal of this legislation is to return the responsibility for public policy-making and the governing of public institutions to elected officials. When a consent decree lasts for decades, as many of them do, many elected officials never have the opportunity to take responsibility for important public services. A politician can say, I would really like to do something about the transportation system in Los Angeles County, for example, but I cannot because of that consent decree. Or I would like to spend more on education in this State, but I really cannot because our budget is determined by these consent decrees on other issues or even on education itself. And their successors in that of-

fice can and often do say the same thing.

Consent decrees, in my view, have become a hiding place for public officials, relieving them of responsibility in the area that the consent decree affects. So let me again repeat, this is a bill, an act, that would really make public officials take responsibility for the things they have been elected to do.

This bill would create an obligation on the part of newly elected public officials that they would have an opportunity to look at every consent decree that their predecessors were part of and defend why the consent decree should continue or go to the courts and explain why the consent decree no longer applies. If the plaintiff can explain to the judge why it is important that the consent decree continue, then the decree stays in place.

Our goal is to return public responsibility to public officials. Too many people in the country today, too many public officials who even try to take on these issues find that the consent decrees that were entered into decades before by their predecessors prevent them from doing the hard things that need to be done.

The only consent decrees that could be dissolved under this action are those in which the plaintiff is incapable of proving a continued need for court supervision. If there is no longer a need for court supervision, would it not be undemocratic not to return the policy decisions to elected officials and in turn to the voters?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### IRAQ WEEK IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Washington is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, this is Iraq Week in the House of Representatives, called by the Republican majority in hopes that they can stop the bleeding, not on the ground in Iraq, but in the opinion polls in this country.

They want to capitalize on the success of the U.S. military last week and define progress in Iraq all over again. Over the last 3 years, the definition of progress by the Republican majority has been as elusive as the President's plan for Iraq.

Still, later this week after lots of Republican speech making, the majority leader will force-feed the American people a new resolution telling them

what to think about the Iraq war. In the fine print is a desperate effort by the Republicans to cling to power in the November election. That is what this week is all about.

Republican leaders hope to commandeer the news cycle and convince the American people that Republicans deserve to stay despite their record on Iraq. In other words, Iraq Week is a staged Republican campaign event.

The resolution the Republicans will force through the House of Representatives on Friday will have nothing to do with increasing the safety of our Nation or the security of our soldiers on the ground in Iraq. It is about the security of the Republican grip on power. The Republicans fear the American people have answered Newt Gingrich's question. Do you remember it? "Had enough?" Well, they have. Poll after poll says the American people indeed have had enough of Republican power. The American people always have accepted sacrifice when it comes to defending the Nation. But one thing they have never accepted is being misled by their leaders. The American people have heard enough to know the trust they placed in the President over his justification to invade Iraq was misplaced.

The American people have seen enough to know this administration and the Republican Congress have no plan except to keep declaring progress. The words, however, pale compared to the images they see on TV every day. Enough facts have emerged for the American people to know that Iraq has become a grim lesson we learned a long time ago in Vietnam. But instead of transferring responsibility, the President declares the tide has turned, U.S. troops will stay in Iraq, and there will be difficult days ahead.

That is a Presidential declaration that more American soldiers will die, more American soldiers will suffer grave physical injuries, more American soldiers will be exposed to depleted uranium, and more American soldiers will return home traumatized by post-traumatic stress disorder.

This is today's reality, and the truth is there is no end in sight. And you will not hear that from the President. Earlier this year, U.S. military commanders talked about significant force reductions by the end of the year. They have stopped talking about it. That is because the reality on the ground in Iraq defies the Republican spin.

But the spinning goes on. Yesterday at Camp Neocon, that is what they used to call Camp David, the President called together the administration in a new effort to define progress. It was a campaign meeting meant to manage the news the American people receive about Iraq. Today, the President made a surprise visit to Iraq, not unlike landing on an aircraft carrier to declare mission accomplished. It wasn't then and it isn't now.

Soon, the Republican leaders will tell the American people what to think,