

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, last week in his surprise visit to Baghdad, President Bush was full of happy talk. "The progress here in Iraq has been remarkable when you really think about it," he said.

But as usual, with this administration, there is a side of the story you don't hear until it leaks out.

Over the weekend, the Washington Post reported on a memo under the name of U.S. Ambassador of Iraq Zalmay Khalizad, which describes the treacherous living conditions faced by Iraqi nationals who work for the U.S. Embassy.

The cable cites harassment from militia groups, hostility from security forces, the ones we have trained, sporadic utilities in 115-degree heat, scarce and expensive fuel, women forced to cover their faces in public, kidnappings of family members, fear of recrimination if it is discovered that they are employed by the embassy and are thus aiding the occupation. Some of these men and women haven't even told their families where they work.

Mr. Speaker, is this the freedom that the President says is transforming the Middle East?

The dispatch describes the central government, the one we have heard the Bush administration pump up to no end, as ineffective and "not relevant." Embassy staff report that it is actually local militia and neighborhood governments that control the streets.

After 2,500 American deaths, more than a quarter of a trillion dollars spent, and our global reputation lying in tatters, we still don't have a grip on basic security in Iraq. It is absolutely scandalous.

Mr. Speaker, if the men and women who work for the U.S. Government feel threatened, how can we possibly hope to maintain peace, rule of law and basic services for millions of ordinary Iraqis living outside of the bubble of the Green Zone?

It couldn't be clearer. We are not trusted, respected or beloved in Iraq. Our military presence is not providing relief from an atmosphere of resentment, danger and paranoia in Iraq; we are contributing to it. In fact, we are exacerbating it.

There is only one answer, Mr. Speaker. It is time, in fact, it is long past time, for our troops to come home. We can help Iraqis build a more promising future. We can help them rebuild their country and do our best to help them resolve sectarian strife. But we can do it only as a partner, not as an occupier. We can do it only if we end this disastrous war, only if we return Iraq to the Iraqis and return our troops to their families.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana 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 California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

#### EXTENSIONS OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask permission to speak out of order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express strong support for extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The importance and necessity of the Voting Rights Act cannot be over-emphasized. We have learned through experience what a difference the vote makes. In 1964, the year before President Johnson signed the act into law, there were only 300 African American elected officials in the entire country. Today there are more than 9,100 black elected officials, including 43 Members of Congress.

The most fundamental right of our democratic system of government is the right of citizens to participate in the political process. The 15th amendment ensures the right of every citizen, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, to vote and participate in the electoral process. However, as we have seen in previous elections, some local governments have actively and, in some instances, have aggressively attempted to disenfranchise African American and other minority voters.

This year, all who care about social justice and equal opportunity in America can share one overriding goal, and that is Congress needs to review the provisions of the Voting Rights Act which will ensure that our Nation's government has the opportunity to reflect the views, the values and, most importantly, the votes of the people it serves.

Of all the civil rights legislation that the Nation has enacted over the past four decades, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is arguably the most important. Yes, every major piece of civil rights legislation has helped to eliminate injustices such as discrimination in education, employment and housing, but it is the Voting Rights Act that empowers Americans to take action against injustices by electing those who pledge to eliminate it and removing those who perpetuate it.

African Americans in the South were prevented from voting by a battery of tactics, poll taxes, literacy tests that

were for blacks only, and the crudest forms of intimidation. From the Southwest to some urban areas in the Northeast and Midwest, Latinos were discouraged from voting in more subtle but just as effective techniques that exploited the vulnerabilities of low-income newcomers for whom English was a second language. Both groups were also the targets of districting designed to dilute the ability to elect officials of their own choosing, a fundamental freedom that all too many Americans take for granted.

And this is why it is so important that Congress renew all three provisions that are set to expire: section 5, which requires Federal approval for all proposed changes in voting or election procedures in areas with a history of discrimination; section 203, which requires some jurisdictions to provide assistance in other languages to voters who are not literate or fluent in English; and the portions of section 6-9 of the act which authorizes the Federal Government to send Federal election examiners and observers to certain jurisdictions covered by section 5 where there is evidence of attempts to intimidate minority voters at the polls.

Mr. Speaker, this act is scheduled to come before us in the next few days, and I am gratified to note that it has generated tremendous support on both sides of the aisle. And I am certain that American people all over the country look forward to its passage. I simply urge strong support.

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

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

#### MORALITY TALE ON AIDS

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to really tell a morality tale that the American people may well not know anything about. Many things go on in the world, and we learn nothing in our press. But if you read widely, as I do, and read something called the Asia Times, which is one of many newspapers around the world, you find out very interesting things are going on.

Everyone knows that there is a problem with AIDS worldwide, and the problem with AIDS is that we, today, have the ability to actually treat people with AIDS with the triple therapy drugs that will make their life longer, allow them to continue working, allow them to take care of their children,