

paid for by American tax-paying citizens. In addition, the Reid-Kennedy bill would permit illegal aliens to pay in-State tuition at public universities, also funded by American taxpayers, and would require our country to consult with Mexico before constructing a wall to protect our own country.

Madam Speaker, the Reid-Kennedy bill is not the answer to our immigration problems, and I encourage my colleagues to oppose it.

MINIMUM WAGE/LIVABLE WAGE

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

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, the economic climate created by years of failed Republican policies is tough for many Americans to swallow. Millions of full-time workers in the Nation who are making the Federal minimum wage, \$5.15, find that every other cost-of-living expense has gone up, from prescription drugs to housing to just about everything, food on our table.

The minimum wage has not increased for 10 years. The millions of Americans who would benefit from that increase know that it is impossible to make ends meet at the current salary that has not been raised since 1997. For example, we are struggling with the rising costs of oil and other expenses.

Madam Speaker, everyone in the country who works full time to support their family deserves to earn a livable wage.

Today, Democrats will demand a vote in this House to increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25. It is only fair. We hope that House Republicans, who have been more than willing to shower giant tax breaks to their wealthy friends, will finally realize that no American working full time deserves to live in poverty.

We hope that you will join with us today to increase the minimum wage.

PALESTINIAN UPHEAVAL

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, the pictures running with recent news reports tell the story: The Palestinians are in upheaval. Earlier this month, hundreds of supporters of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah faction stormed parliament buildings in Ramallah, setting parts of them ablaze. This was in response to earlier Hamas-led attacks on Fatah security forces in Gaza.

Madam Speaker, this escalating violence among rival Palestinian factions should teach the world a lesson. Elections alone do not make people democratic. The elections are important, but without the foundation of a civil society and certain values, they will not guarantee democratic freedom.

The Palestinian people must also embrace basic democratic values and prin-

ciples: the rule of law; freedom of speech; due process protections; respect for honest, civil debate; religious liberties. The list goes on.

Continuing to choose extremism rather than fundamental civil reforms like these will only lead to further upheaval and hardship.

PROVIDING A CARING FAMILY FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

(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. Madam Speaker, I just returned from a briefing held by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption and their Caring Connections Program for children. I have never been more inspired, I have never been more motivated, and I have never been more stimulated than when I heard all of these young people who grew up in foster homes talking about their experiences and where they have come.

So I simply want to commend Senator LANDRIEU and Representative GINNY BROWN-WAITE for their leadership of this activity and others. We need to make sure that all of our children have warm, caring families in which to live.

STAFF SGT. ALBERTO SANCHEZ JR.—IMMIGRANT SOLDIER

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, more than 30 years ago, Alberto and Olga Sanchez decided to leave the dusty border town of Renosa, Mexico, and immigrate to Texas with their small child, Alberto, Jr.

Alberto grew up in Houston and went to Milby High School. After high school, he wanted to go to college but decided to join the United States Army first. So he spent 9 years as a member of the United States Army.

He married his sweetheart, Yesenia; and their fifth wedding anniversary was to be next month.

But, Saturday, Staff Sergeant Alberto Sanchez, Jr., died while on combat patrol in Balad, Iraq. Caught in the path of an IED explosion, his wounds overcame him. He was 33 years of age.

He was assigned to the Army's 1st Battalion, 68th Armored Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team of the 4th Infantry Division.

IEDs, improvised explosive devices, are nothing more than booby traps buried by cowardly, masked terrorists who lack the courage to face our troops.

Staff Sergeant Sanchez died while in service to his country. America joins his wife, his parents, his two siblings, along with a host of friends and family that mourn the loss of this American soldier. He is another example that freedom always costs and always will.

And that's just the way it is.

PLAN FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM IRAQ

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, on Sunday, Iraq's prime minister unveiled a 24-point plan that included a timetable for U.S. withdrawal.

Last week, the U.S. military's top commander in Iraq briefed the President and top Republicans about a plan to significantly reduce the number of U.S. soldiers in Iraq.

For months, Democrats have been calling for a new direction, including a timetable to redeploy U.S. soldiers out of harm's way; and the American people have been saying it is time for a new direction that protects U.S. interests by protecting U.S. soldiers.

The Iraqi people, the American people and the U.S. commanders all say the same thing: It is time for a timetable. And the President still says the same thing: Stay the course.

Madam Speaker, the Democrats were wrong. The President's favorite phrase, stay the course, is not a slogan. It is a direct order for Republican Members of the Congress to deny their better judgment and disregard the concern of their American constituents and the top five military commanders.

The President must have some kind of October surprise in mind. The President is off course, and until there is a mid-term course correction, America will remain misled and misguided in Iraq, and U.S. soldiers will bear the brunt of the President's stubbornness.

OPPOSING BILINGUAL BALLOTS

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, I am greatly concerned about a provision that is in the bill for bilingual ballots. That language still remains in the bill.

Let me be clear. I support legal immigration and certainly celebrating one's heritage. However, the bilingual ballot provision has long kept new citizens from increasing their knowledge of our language and from fully integrating into our society.

Not only is it expensive to print ballots in a variety of different dialects and tongues, but it reinforces a fractious society.

I had planned to offer an amendment with my good friend and colleague, Congressman Steve King of Iowa, to strip this arcane and divisive language.

I ask my colleagues for support of this measure. You heard it here.