

LEAVE ISSUE OF SAME-SEX
MARRIAGE TO THE STATES

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak out of order for 5 minutes.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, today we debated a constitutional amendment drafted not to protect my marriage or my family, I see no reasonable way to argue it would, but rather to explicitly deny a portion of our society the right to marry and the benefits that accompany that kind of partnership.

I do not advocate the legalization of gay marriage, but our Constitution is simply not the proper place to set this kind of social policy. I believed back in 1996 when I voted for the Defense of Marriage Act and I still believe today the decision about whether to recognize gay marriage should be left to the States.

I can't help but wonder why we are doing this. What are we so afraid of? Gay men and women pass through our lives every day. They are wonderful teachers and leaders and role models who happen to be gay, and sometimes we don't even know they are gay. There are brave men and women buried in Arlington National Cemetery who happen to be gay.

I wouldn't be a Member of Congress today if it weren't for an extraordinary teacher I had in high school 40 years ago. I learned years later he was gay and that he had to commute from Connecticut to Washington, D.C. to be with his partner every weekend, in part to protect his privacy and his job.

When I went to college, my understanding of gay people was impacted again by my wife's best friend. One day she told us that she, too, like my wife and I, had found the love of her life. We were eager to meet the boyfriend she was so madly in love with. But we soon learned her love was not a he, but a she. Once we got over our surprise and our ways of thinking about relationships, we were able to sincerely rejoice in the joy they brought each other because we knew what a dear and good person our friend is.

My perception of gay people evolved further during my first campaign for Congress when I worked with a magnificent young man named Carl Brown. He became my friend, and he gave me another gay face to know. Carl has since passed away from AIDS, but I remember him as a person of exceptional dignity and grace.

My teacher, my wife's best friend, and Carl helped me understand their lives and I think made me a better person in the process.

The Constitution of the United States, which established our government, grants us free speech and gives all citizens the right to vote, should not be dishonored by this effort to write in discrimination. I am clearly sensitive to some of my colleagues'

concerns about potential biblical and social implications of legalized same-sex marriage, but I oppose this proposed amendment because I believe the Constitution is not the proper instrument to set or reject such policy. That debate should happen in our State legislatures.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICAN NEEDS A NEW DIRECTION TO COMBAT TERRORISM

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

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

There was no objection.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight because I believe that America needs a new direction to secure our country and combat terrorism. We need a new direction so our children and our children's children will live in a safer and more secure world.

On May 1, 2003, President Bush declared that Iraq is free, that major combat operations in Iraq have ended. Yet in more than 3 years since, our world has not become a safer place, and our military families continue to suffer. More than 130,000 U.S. troops are serving in Iraq and more than 10,500 members of the selected Reserves have been deployed more than three times. Ninety-seven percent of the National Guard combat and special operations battalions have been mobilized since September 11, 2001, and the average tour of duty for National Guard members is 342 days.

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Two thousand five hundred fifty-three of our men and women have paid the ultimate price. That includes 11 members that I represent from East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley: Private First Class Jose Casanova, age 23. Lance Corporal Manuel Ceniceors, age 23. Lance Corporal Francisco Martinez Flores, age 21. Sergeant First Class Kelly Bolor, age 38. Lance Corporal Benjamin Gonzalez, age 23. Corporal Jorge Gonzalez, age 20. Sergeant Atanacio Haro-Marin, age 27. Specialist Leroy Harris-Kelly, III, age 20. Corporal Stephen Johnson, age 24. Corporal Rudy Salas, age 20. And, lastly, Marine Corporal Carlos Arellano, age 22.

Another 10,327 have been injured, not including more than 8,500 who have been injured so badly that they cannot return to action. I strongly support our servicemen and women that have performed admirably under these very difficult conditions. These conditions

have been worsened by the lack of needed supplies, and our men and women continue to serve without a plan to secure the peace.

Today, the Government Accountability Office testified that Congress had appropriated \$430 billion to the Department of Defense for the global war on terror. According to the GAO, and I quote: "Neither the DOD nor the Congress reliably know how much the war is costing Americans."

The GAO also testified that the U.S. can expect to incur significant costs for an unspecified time in the future, requiring decision-makers to consider difficult trade-offs. As the Nation faces increasing long-range fiscal challenges, we have seen some of the trade-offs already.

Critical programs remain unfunded and underfunded by this administration, and our veterans and their families are the ones that are suffering. There are \$3 billion worth of gaps in needed services for our Nation's veterans. The number of new veterans waiting for health care appointments at the VA, the Veterans Administration, has risen by 400 percent over the last 2 years.

Funding for Homeland Security is suffering too. And as a result, because of the administration's misguided policies, first responder grants have been slashed by 59 percent, and only 5 percent of containers entering the U.S. ports are screened, and there are 800 fewer border patrol agents than what was authorized in the 9/11 Commission Act.

Afghanistan is also suffering from the Bush administration's misguided policies. Secretary Rumsfeld wrote in a letter today that the United States maintains its strong commitment to Afghan's success. We look forward to continuing our strong partnership, he said.

Yet the people in Afghanistan are not feeling that commitment. Between November 2003 and April 2006, the number of insurgents has quadrupled from 5,000 to 20,000. The average number of daily attacks by insurgents has climbed by more than 70.

The Afghan Defense Minister recently stated that Afghanistan needs five times the number of security forces to address the issue of a resurgent Taliban. And without them, Afghanistan is in real danger of collapse. If his warnings were not enough, just today the Taliban recaptured two towns in the southern province of Pakistan's border.

Despite the increasing conflict in Afghanistan, despite the lack of a plan for peace in Iraq, despite the lack of accountability for government contracts, and despite the trade-offs on homeland security, important first responder programs, the administration wants the United States to stay the course.

I could not disagree more. War and military might alone does not show strength in foreign policy rooted in a