

be to target illegal drug traffickers and corrupt officials such as police chiefs. Our government must couple this with aid to the rural poor in Afghanistan in order to provide financial alternatives to the illicit opium trade.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues and I debate the merits of the President's plan to escalate the war in Iraq, which I oppose, it is important for us not to forget where the real war on terror continues today in Afghanistan. The United States must intensify its redevelopment efforts in Afghanistan as an alternative to the opium trade, which is only providing further financial backing for the Taliban-led insurgency.

#### A LITTLE GIRL'S DAY IN COURT

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford was a bright, talented and energetic little girl. She lived with her father, Mark, who was a single parent, trying to raise three children. He also lived with her grandparents, Mark's parents, who loved her as much. Jessica was a great kid. Everybody thought the world of her, and she took care of the family just like they took care of her.

Mark even moved to Florida to protect his children, thinking they would be safer in south Florida than they were where they lived. That is when the tragedy began. Almost 2 years ago, on the evening of February 23, 2005, the Lunsfords lives were changed forever.

Among the shadows of a warm Florida night, there was a perpetrator running loose. He was stalking the Lunsford home, and he was watching 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford for several days. He waited till everyone in the house was asleep, and the outlaw in the middle of the night snuck into the Lunsford home, crept down a darkened hallway, and kidnapped Jessica Lunsford from the safety of her open home in the middle of the night.

The search for Jessica, 9-year-old happy girl, went on for several weeks. Hundreds of volunteers were involved. Finally, a neighbor, and repeat sex offender, John Couey, was arrested for her murder.

Couey was a registered sex offender, but, of course, he was on the lam. He had run. He had disappeared. Couey confirmed what the police had already suspected against him, and he had kidnapped Jessica. He sexually assaulted her numerous times, and he held her captive for several days.

Mr. Speaker, when he was not abusing this little girl, he stuffed her in a closet. Then when he was ready to abuse her again, he would pull her out and have his way with her.

When he realized that the sheriff's department was out to get him, knew that he was the culprit, he decided he had to remove the evidence, this little girl. So he tied Jessica Lunsford's

hands and feet together with stereo wire. He went out into the yard, he dug a hole, he came back into the house, his own home, put two trash bags over Jessica Lunsford, picked her up and threw her in the hole. Yes, he buried that 9-year-old girl alive.

When she was found several days later, she had poked her fingers through the plastic bags seeking the air of freedom, freedom that never came. Couey admitted everything that I just told you to the police, in every detail.

But while he was confessing to these horrors he inflicted on Jessica, he asked for a lawyer. Unfortunately, the police ignored his request, and this would cause Couey's confession to be inadmissible as evidence against him. You see, when a defendant asks for a lawyer, he must be given one right away or the statements he makes will not be admissible in court.

However, even without this confession, there is a lot of evidence against Couey to prove his guilt. After 2 years and several delays, Couey is standing trial for his evil deeds. Today, John Couey is sitting in a Miami courthouse as jury selection begins. Twelve men and women are being asked to decide his guilt in his crime against this little girl.

Jessica has been needing justice for 2 years. Her family has been waiting for 2 years for this justice. As a father of three girls and three granddaughters, I know how important little girls are to a father like Mark Lunsford, and he has lost his little girl.

You know, as a society, as a culture, as a Nation, we are never going to be judged by the way we treat the rich, the famous, the powerful, the important folks. We will be judged by the way we treat the weak, the innocent, the elderly, and, yes, the children, the Jessicas of the world.

So the State of Florida and this jury need to give John Couey, sex offender, child killer, his day in court. When the evidence is in, hopefully the words of this country song will ring true when it says: "A man had to answer for the wicked that he done," because "justice is the one thing you should always find. You got to draw a hard line" in the sand. "We got too many gangsters doing dirty deeds. We've got too much corruption, too much crime in the streets. It's time the long arm of the law put a few more in the ground," because justice is the one thing you should always find.

And that's just the way it is.

#### BRING OUR TROOPS HOME

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow this House will begin a debate on Iraq. This is the first of a series of debates that we must have on the House floor. It is a resolution. It reflects

President Bush's plan to escalate the occupation of Iraq, and it will be a clean up or down vote.

I commend the Democratic leadership for providing a time for every single Member of this body to come to the floor and have their say. If you support escalation, you vote "yes." If not, you vote "no." I will support the legislation as a very important first step in this debate.

But after that, Congress must go on record in opposition of the war in general. First we have to go on record in opposition of escalation, and then we must change our course and lay out a plan to bring our troops home. There have been many, many ideas, both inside and outside of Congress, to plan for an end to this occupation of Iraq.

Few are as comprehensive as H.R. 508, the Bring the Troops Home and Iraq Sovereignty Act. I introduced this bill last month and have 34, 35 cosponsors today, with more interest expressed every single day.

H.R. 508 will end the occupation of Iraq within 6 months of passage. It will accelerate the training and equipping of Iraqi military and security forces while preparing to bring our troops and contractors out of Iraq safely.

It will commit to working with the international community to assist the Iraqis in rebuilding and in reconciliation if they agree and want us to be there. H.R. 508 will fully fund the health care commitment to our returning veterans. Additionally, the bill revokes the President's Iraq war powers, prevents the establishment of permanent bases in Iraq, and returns the oil rights to the Iraqi people.

We owe it to our brave men and brave women in uniform and to the Iraqi people to bring our troops home now. Let us be honest, the Iraqis don't want us there. They view us as an occupying force. They want to be strengthening their security forces, and they want to establish a reliable and dependable infrastructure and provide for their most basic needs like sanitation, health care, and education.

We can assist them; but in the end, Iraq must belong to the Iraqi people. Having learned from our past, we will never turn our backs on the returning troops, those who have been put in an unimaginable position. They have seen death; they have seen destruction up close, in a way many of us will never understand. They are returning with scars, both visible and invisible. The least we can do is fulfill our commitment to them by fully funding the medical services they have been promised. This is not a gift we are giving them. This is a right, this is an entitlement.

So I rise tonight, and I will rise again during the three days of debate to signal my support for the upcoming resolution as a very important first step: my support for the troops and their promised benefits, my support for the American people, who want our troops home.