

that was measured at 5,000-plus parts per million of indoor air contamination of lead.

My office called and we got FEMA to send a trailer over 2 days later so they could set up some computers and telephones and at least have a rudimentary office in the parking lot next to their closed-down office being remediated for lead contamination.

Three days later, the following Monday, I found that FEMA had come and towed the trailer away because it was contaminated with formaldehyde. Two-plus years after Hurricane Katrina, they still don't know which of their trailers have formaldehyde in them and which ones don't.

That is why oversight is needed. Whether it is the Veterans' Affairs Committee, which has performed significant oversight, whether it is the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee looking at Coast Guard sweetheart deals with military contractors that resulted in eight vessels being lengthened by 13 feet and rendered unseaworthy, the 123s, as they call them, so they are now being scrapped in Baltimore Harbor, or whether it is oversight of the conduct of the war in Iraq, this body needs to perform oversight, and I am glad after the last 6 years, it is finally doing so.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, we have just about 5 minutes left, so I thought all my colleagues would like a last chance to talk about what article I means to them and where they think we in this Congress can do our best work in furtherance of the goals of article I.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, when I think about article I, I think this passage in the Federalist Papers where it says that we are to be in intimate sympathy with the people, I got to tell you, that when I sat down along with my colleague Congressman HODES and Congressman KLEIN with the Financial Services Committee to listen to people who had faced foreclosure in their homes because of the subprime lending crisis, I thought about article I.

Mr. Speaker, I thought about article I because article I is that provision that empowers me as an individual Member of Congress to want to listen to people who are facing foreclosure; listen to the mortgage originators who say, yes, we do need to have some regulation of what we are doing, there are some cowboys out there; to listen to these community bankers; and to listen to people who say, look, I made all my mortgage payments, but there is a foreclosure on the left and a boarded building on the right, and my house where I paid every payment is now suffering loss in the value of it because of this foreclosure crisis.

I was in intimate contact with article I as I sat there in earnest and sincere humility listening to people and what they were going through, when I was so proud to sit there on that committee to be able to respond to the people. Because we have to go back there

every 2 years. We can't take a vacation from the people in the House. We got to listen every week. Week in, week out, we are in touch with our folks.

So Mr. Speaker, Mr. YARMUTH, I just wanted to say that article I, what it means to me is sympathy with the people and action on their behalf.

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I can't help but think about the importance of the power of the purse. James Madison said, "The House of Representatives can not only refuse, but they alone can propose the supplies requisite for the support of government."

The power over the purse is our weapon to use, and I am hoping that this Congress will no longer be the President's enabler when it comes to his misguided policy in Iraq. Earlier this week, he asked for an additional \$46 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, bringing the total request this year to almost \$200 billion. By the time we are done, we are going to be at \$2.4 trillion in Iraq. That is enough to provide college educations for every student who wants to go to a 4-year college for free at a private college or university. We could provide health care for every American for a year for the money we are spending.

It is going to be up to Congress to make tough decisions on whether or not we are going to use the power of the purse to take charge of this President's misguided policy.

So I am in contact and intimate sympathy with my constituents in New Hampshire who have said to me loud and clear, "Do something to stop this President's policies in Iraq."

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, just briefly, I thank the gentleman for the time. As we began, the 2006 election was not simply a change of course, but a return to checks and balances. Members were elected, as my colleague over here says, to hear from their constituents. We were also elected to speak for our constituents, and we have to be their voice. That is what article I is all about.

So I am glad that this is probably the beginning of many hours to come, where we are going to come to this House floor and we are going to talk about article I and reclaim that responsibility.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank the gentleman. Finally, our president.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for being here. It couldn't have been put better. We represent the entire bread of this country, from New York to New Hampshire out to Minnesota, Kentucky down to Florida. And there is more to come and there will be more to talk about this.

I am just reminded, remember how the Constitutional Convention ended? All of us remember this story from school, where Benjamin Franklin was asked what he was thinking about, and he said, I remember looking at that sun sitting behind General Washington and thinking during the time that this

was crafted, is that a rising or a setting sun? And he said when they had ended, I could say with happiness, it is a rising sun.

This country's democracy is still healthy, it is still moving forward, the checks and balances are still here, and this country knows that it is the true secret credit of where our greatness lies.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and I thank all my colleagues. It has been a wonderful hour. I think the dialogue we have had tonight not only discusses an important issue, but also reflects the greatness of the Founding Fathers because it created this body in which we can have this type of discussion. So I thank my colleagues once again. We will have many more discussions like this.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### VACATING 5-MINUTE SPECIAL ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the 5-minute special order of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is vacated.

There was no objection.

#### CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I will address this house tonight on a very special issue. It is good to hear that the speakers prior to me used as the basis of their dialogue the Constitution.

Far too often it seems to me that in this House we talk and pontificate about all kinds of things, but sometimes we forget the basis for all legislation, the basis for what we do, the basis for the oath that we took as Members of Congress, was to support the Constitution of the United States.

□ 1830

Like many Members of Congress, I carry a pocket Constitution with me to refer to from time to time. I want to read just one portion of the U.S. Constitution. It is the eighth amendment to the Constitution. We call the first 10 amendments to our Constitution the Bill of Rights.

It says in the eighth amendment that excessive bail should not be required, nor excessive fines imposed. It also says nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted. You notice the phrase is "cruel and unusual punishment." Far too often some quote this phrase in the Constitution as cruel or unusual. That is not the law and it has never been the law. The law is punishment should not be cruel and unusual.

A little history is in order. Our forefathers that wrote this Constitution did not come up with that phrase. It