

Mr. HOYER. Those are my thoughts; my thoughts and my hope. I think that lame duck sessions, in my experience, have not been particularly productive, particularly when you are going to have a change of administration. Whether it is Senator MCCAIN, Senator CLINTON or Senator OBAMA, we are going to have a change of administration. I expressed it as a hope, and we are going to work toward not having a lame duck session.

Let me go back and answer your question. I think we had a week delay on the supplemental, and I think the week of May 5 is the week we are looking at for the supplemental. As you know, I said the last week in April, the first week in May. That is the first full week in May, so I guess I am still accurate. We are on for that week hopefully on the supplemental, which will be timely in accomplishing the objective of getting dollars in time before the depletion of the funds that have already been appropriated.

With respect to the appropriations process, obviously I will be discussing with Mr. OBEY and with Mr. SPRATT, if we fail to pass a budget, we have to give the Appropriations Committee a figure to mark to. My thought would be that we will do as we have done in years past, deem that the House budget will be the numbers to which they will mark. But we have not made that decision at this point in time.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that.

On the idea on a congressional year that will end before the election, I know last week we voted in an unusual way to put off the vote on the Columbia trade agreement, and I suppose that could mean to put it off indefinitely. Without a lame duck session, and that is one of the times when it was thought that we might get back to those trade bills. I'm not aware of any real discussion that has gone on this week on this Columbia agreement. I hope we are continuing to look for a way to get that important bill done.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

The Speaker has focused on, as I think she has been quoted in the press as saying, we are still looking at TAA and discussing that with the administration. TAA, trade adjustment assistance, we think that is very important. There have been some positive discussions and indications from the administration. In addition, I know the Speaker has been discussing additional items with the leadership in the House and with Mr. REID, and I think as well with the White House. So I think discussions are ongoing. The Speaker has made it very clear that the action taken from her perception, certainly from my perception, was not the death knell of Columbia. I know that some have interpreted it that way, but I don't think that the Speaker or I interpreted it that way.

Mr. BLUNT. I hope we are continuing that.

Also, we are now entering the third month since the expiration of the Protect America Act. I know you and I were in a meeting a week or 10 days ago on this, and I still don't see any scheduled discussion of legislation on the floor that brings us back to that whole issue of foreign intelligence surveillance, and I hope we are moving toward a conclusion of that important issue.

I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. As you know because we have had an opportunity to discuss it, I have essentially been coordinating this issue on our side with Mr. REYES and Mr. CONYERS, and also working with Mr. ROCKEFELLER. And you and I had a meeting with Senator BOND, the ranking member on the Republican side.

I am hopeful that we can have a proposition passed through the House and hopefully by the Senate by the Memorial Day break. That is my time frame. I am working toward that. I have meetings tomorrow with respect to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. I am going to have meetings this afternoon, and I had meetings yesterday. I am giving it a lot of attention, with others as well. As you know, we met briefly. I would reiterate to you that when I have some better fix on where I think the Senate is willing to go or where we are willing to go and where we can reach agreement, I want to discuss it with you because I am hopeful that we can work together to try to make that happen.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman. I think every day matters in this regard, and certainly going home for another work period at home without a conclusion here would be the wrong thing for us to do. I hope we can meet your goal and hopefully meet it earlier than the last day or two that we are here before the Memorial Day break.

Mr. HOYER. If the gentleman would yield, I share that hope. Again, I share the conviction, which I have expressed on numerous occasions, that the law that currently exists to my understanding, and when I say currently exists, and the authorizations that were given under the Protect America Act, are in place and in fact are continuing to provide opportunities to intercept those communications that the administration and the intelligence community feel are necessary to focus on. Having said that, we are trying, I'm trying to move ahead as quickly as we can come to agreement.

Mr. BLUNT. I want to say in response that I am not quite as confident, and maybe you're not confident either, that law doesn't meet all of the circumstances that occur. And even if it does, that law reaches an anniversary of those particular orders August 1. Again, coming back after Memorial Day, we are suddenly under a situation where even those things that we currently believe are covered, we will begin to have a problem in them expiring. And certainly the things that are

not covered, there is no easy way in my view, which may be different than yours, there is no easy way to begin to listen to a new set of conversations that we just determined need to be listened to. That is what that whole debate is about. We don't need to have that debate here. But I have pledged to do everything that I can to bring this to a conclusion.

Mr. HOYER. If the gentleman would yield, I want to thank the gentleman because I believe he is absolutely sincere in that effort. He and I have had an opportunity to have discussions. We are going to continue those over the coming days, and hopefully we can get this done sooner rather than later. The chairman of the Judiciary Committee and the chairman of the Intelligence Committee have both expressed that objective.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman.

HOUSING CRISIS

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

HOUSING CRISIS

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

Mr. HALL of New York. Madam Speaker, we are in a housing crisis in the United States, yet the Bush administration seems determined to ignore it.

Losing your home has a deep economic and emotional impact that can last for years. When the mortgage crisis broadens as wide as it has, entire communities, not just individuals, face dire consequences for the future.

In the Hudson Valley of New York, we have been especially hard hit. Over the last 3 months, foreclosures in Westchester County were up almost 40 percent from last year, and they've more than tripled since 2005. Putnam County, also in my district, has the single highest foreclosure rate of any county in New York State.

This crisis demands bold action. This Congress has already expanded the Federal loan limits to make Federal protections available to more home buyers, now we need to extend these Federal guarantees to more homeowners in need. This Congress will not only protect institutions like Bear Stearns, but will also protect American families who remain at great risk.

□ 1430

WELCOMING POPE BENEDICT XVI

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to welcome Pope Benedict XVI to our Nation's Capital as part of his official papal visit to the United States. During this 6-day trip to Washington, D.C. and New York City, the Holy Father, who serves as a wondrous example of faith and leadership, will help Catholics and all Christians renew their faith by delivering mass to tens of thousands of people.

I was honored to have the opportunity to attend mass with the Holy Father at the new Nationals Stadium here in D.C. this morning. And, Madam Speaker, it was truly a blessed event.

Despite his relatively short tenure, Pope Benedict XVI has emerged as a vocal and effective leader for Catholics throughout the world. Over the past 3 years, His Holiness has stressed the need for a return to fundamental Christian values in response to what many see as the world's sloping trend toward secularism.

As Pope, he has focused on the importance and sanctity of human life, especially the life of the unborn, an issue that's very important to me, both as a member of the Catholic Church and as a Member of Congress. But every American, regardless of party affiliation or religious belief can find hope in his message of freedom and justice for all people.

Madam Speaker, as a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Marietta, Georgia, I humbly welcome Pope Benedict XVI to the United States as he continues to spread his message of faith, love and service in Christ.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MIDDLE EAST POLICIES

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I rise to bring to the House's attention a potentially, very dangerous new turn in the administration's policies in the Middle East. In recent weeks the administration has been stirring up the pot on Iran again, and that has caused many Americans to worry that the administration is getting ready to launch another attack in the region, this time in Tehran.

In fact, there's more than enough evidence to show that the administration may be laying the groundwork for military action. In an interview last month, the President said that the Iranians, and I quote him, he said, "the Iranians have declared they want to

have a nuclear weapon to destroy people."

That would be troubling, Madam Speaker, if it were true. But the Iranians haven't said anything of the kind. It is shocking to me that our Commander-in-Chief would make unsubstantiated and misleading statements about a subject as important and as serious as nuclear weapons.

Another troubling sign came last month when Admiral William Fallon retired. Admiral Fallon was a bulwark against the Iran hawks in the administration, and his departure raised fears that he was, first, forced to retire, and that next, the rush to war was on.

And several weeks ago, Vice President CHENEY said that he has "high confidence" that the Iranians have an ongoing nuclear enrichment program. Of course, the most recent national intelligence estimate reported that the Iranians stopped working on a suspected nuclear weapons program 4 years ago.

And finally, General Petraeus told Congress last week that Iranian-backed special groups now pose the greatest long-term threat in Iraq.

For years, the administration told us that the main enemy was al Qaeda or Sunni insurgents, or Shiite militia. Now they tell us, forget them; it's Iran. In my mind, this raises legitimate concerns that the administration may be inventing new excuses to stay in Iraq by trying to convince the American people to support war against Iran.

Madam Speaker, I too am concerned about Iran. The Iranians should stay out of Iraq. They should not develop nuclear weapons. No country should develop nuclear weapons. But if we want Iran to behave well, we must stop threatening to attack them. Instead, our first line of defense must be engagement and aggressive diplomacy.

The absolutely essential first step in that process must be the redeployment of our troops out of Iraq. How can we expect Iraq's neighbors to cooperate in stabilizing the region while we insist on an open-ended foreign occupation with 140,000 troops and tens of thousands of military contractors?

Ending the occupation will allow us to launch a broad initiative to bring the nations in the region to the table, to address the relevant, the political, the economic and the security issues.

And Madam Speaker, when it comes to Iran's nuclear challenge, we must retake the high moral ground in the United States of America. When we turn our backs on nuclear nonproliferation, abandon the comprehensive test ban treaty and develop new nuclear weapons of our own, under what circumstances can we tell another nation to abandon their nuclear dreams?

The American people do not want a wider conflict in the Middle East. They want our leaders to spend every waking moment working to bring peace to the region. This is not the time for heated rhetoric, for bullying and new threats. It is time to try the one thing we haven't tried, diplomacy.

SERGEANT SHAUN PAUL TOUSHA:
HULL, TEXAS HERO

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, today the small town of Hull Texas, population 1,800, is mourning the loss of a native son who grew up to be a mighty warrior for the United States Army. He gave up everything he had to protect everyone else's freedom.

Army Sergeant Shaun Paul Tousha was killed in Baghdad, Iraq on April 9, 2008 when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle.

Madam Speaker, the IED is the way our cowardly enemy fights this war. And in my Congressional district area, Shaun Paul is the 26th area resident that has been killed in Iraq or Afghanistan during these wars.

He was a man from small town Texas who had a playful heart, and he made a big impression on everybody that knew him growing up. He died as a war hero at the age of 30, and he will forever be recognized as how he lived, that being a loving husband, a caring father and a great friend to all those people in rural America.

Shaun Paul Tousha was born February 11, 1978 in Silsbee, Texas. He grew up in the town of Hull, Texas, and he was the son of the late Tommy Gene and Roberta Tousha. He was a husband to Christy Tousha, and loving father of the two children, Colton and Maycee.

As a teenager, Shaun played football, like most Texas rural boys do. He played at Hull-Daisetta High School. And he also liked to ride horses. And being a cowboy, he enjoyed bull riding.

His stepmother, Doris Tousha, was very proud of Shaun. She described him as outgoing and an individual who had a lot of friends. He was always cutting up, acting silly, and made friends easily. He liked to joke around, and his personality drew people toward him. She said that he may have been a handful growing up, but she was proud of the way he turned out.

And after graduating from Hull-Daisetta High School in May of 1996, Shaun got a job at a wire company in Dayton, Texas. He worked there for several years before he heard his Nation's call and joined the United States Army at the age of 22 in February of 2000.

His father, Tommy Gene Tousha, was extremely proud of his son's decision to serve in the Army, and even went with him to the local recruiting station when he joined up.

Madam Speaker, General Patton once said "we should live for something, rather than to die for nothing." Shaun sought to live his life in duty to this country.

Shaun attended basic training in Ft. Benning, Georgia and later was stationed at Ft. Hood, Texas. He was assigned as a Generator Equipment Repairman in the 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, in Ft. Hood, Texas.