

I recently joined with a bipartisan coalition to form the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement Working Group. This group, composed of Members of Congress who represent diverse districts from across the country, wants to see this agreement ratified.

Despite being signed by President Bush over 3 years ago, Congress has yet to pass the agreement. President Obama cites the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement as one of our biggest domestic trade priorities and would like to see disagreements worked out by the next G20 meeting in November. It's already late September and very little progress has been made to get this agreement passed.

The benefits to the U.S. are obvious. Passing a free trade agreement with South Korea, who is our seventh largest trading partner, would add an estimated \$10 billion to \$12 billion to our gross domestic product. What we have already seen in Alabama could be expanded across this great country of ours.

Madam Speaker, our number one priority must be getting Americans back to work. We have already seen the benefits of a close partnership with South Korea. Let's expand on that relationship. I can think of no better way to create jobs for Americans at virtually no cost than to pass the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement.

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Without question, there are many issues we must tackle in this difficult economic and political time. But trade, especially an agreement that enjoys bipartisan support such as the one with South Korea, can and should be an issue in which we work together. Let's not let partisan politics get in the way of this agreement.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### THE SPIRIT OF SOUTH FLORIDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise to remember the life and legacy of a great south Floridian and fellow Cuban American, Ricardo Mayo-Alvarez.

Ricardo was an irreplaceable member of the Cuban American community. Having fled Cuba's communist regime, Ricardo continued the fight for a free Cuba in south Florida.

Ricardo became a successful entrepreneur and started a chain of pharmacies in south Florida. He generously gave of his time to serve his commu-

nity and was a constant fixture in the civic and cultural fabric of south Florida.

Although he was deeply committed to the struggle for a free Cuba, I know that the role he cherished the most was that of devoted husband, father, and grandfather.

Ricardo leaves behind his beloved wife and partner, Nieves Fraga, and his children—Jorge, Alina, and Ricky—as well as his grandchildren.

Ricardo, we will never forget you nor your selfless legacy. Rest in peace, my friend.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to praise the Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County and its executive director, Carmen Caldwell, who has served our area in so many ways over the years. Neighborhood volunteers are truly the backbone of our communities. Volunteers have done so much to reduce crime and to help keep our south Florida neighborhoods safer.

Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County will be celebrating its 35th anniversary at the Doubletree Miami Mart/Airport Hotel on October 1 and will be honoring the leaders of south Florida's war on crime.

It is my honor and privilege to recognize the many dedicated and hard-working members of Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County and to thank each of them for what they do to help keep us safe.

Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the International Ballet Festival of Miami for another spectacular year of performances. Since 1995, this yearly celebration of the arts has brought some of the world's leading ballet companies to our area of south Florida.

In addition to being known as a hub for international commerce, south Florida has a thriving and diverse arts community. Through the dedication of Pedro Pablo Pena, the festival has become a yearly staple on the south Florida calendar with five spectacular performances at four theaters. Ballet companies from as far away as Hungary, Australia, and Italy have participated in this festival.

I congratulate Pedro Pablo Pena and everyone who made this year's International Ballet Festival of Miami a resounding success. Your efforts have enriched south Florida, and we are all the better for it.

#### THE DEADLIEST YEAR OF THE AFGHAN WAR

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the bad news in Afghanistan just continues to pile up. This week, a helicopter crash in the southern part of the country brought the number of 2010 coalition fatalities to 529. That makes this the deadliest of the 9 years we have been

mired in this war. And, of course, we still have more than 2 months remaining before the calendar turns.

Meanwhile, these deaths appear to be in vain. While Afghan citizens who turned out to vote this weekend must be saluted for their courage, well, the fact that courage was required to exercise a basic democratic right is rather telling in and of itself. But the parliamentary elections were marred by violence, not to mention all kinds of fraud and irregularities. Time Magazine quotes one candidate as saying, "It was complete anarchy. Everyone was trying to manipulate this election."

Mr. Speaker, Afghanistan's financial infrastructure is crumbling almost as badly as is its democratic infrastructure. One of the nation's most prominent banks is teetering on the brink of collapse, at the same time that cronies and relatives of President Karzai appear to have used the bank to line their own pockets.

And in yesterday's New York Times, there was a long story about how families are dressing their little girls as boys, just so they can get a job and an education—and even so they can preserve the family's honor to have more boys than girls.

Steven Walt of Harvard University, a member of the Afghanistan Study Group, summarizes the bleakness of the situation. In the last few years, Walt says, "We have had a fraudulent presidential election, an inconclusive offensive in Marja, a delayed and downgraded operation in Kandahar, and a run on the corrupt bank of Kabul. Casualty levels are up, and aid groups in Afghanistan now report that the security situation is worse than ever, despite a heightened U.S. presence."

Mr. Speaker, other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?

Seriously, there is little to be encouraged by in Afghanistan. And that is the situation that it is in now. Now, a new book that has come out this week by Bob Woodward reveals that even top White House officials were deeply skeptical about escalating the war. The Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan is quoted as saying of our strategy, point blank, "It can't work."

He is right, Mr. Speaker. But what can work is a smart security approach, one that replaces the military surge with a civilian surge. At this point, a military occupation can't cure what ails Afghanistan; it can only spread the disease. But an influx of humanitarian aid can deliver a brighter, peaceful future for Afghanistan, elections that are free and fair, government leaders with legitimacy and integrity, schools that educate all children—even the Afghan girls, or especially the Afghan girls—and an economy that creates opportunity and lifts people out of poverty.

The current policy is not redeemable. It will continue to engender death, destruction, instability, and chaos. There is only one answer, Mr. Speaker: Bring our troops home.