

Iraqi nation. Despite ongoing pockets of violence in a few Iraqi cities, it is clear that millions of Iraqis will finally be able to shape their own futures by expressing and exercising their right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, this will truly be a national election that Iraq and the rest of the Middle East can and should be proud of. More than 14.3 million Iraqi citizens have registered to vote. More than 190 political parties will be on the ballot, encompassing almost 19,000 Iraqi citizens standing for election. Finally and most importantly, nearly 80 percent of Iraqis say that they will vote, even in the face of threatened violence from the terrorist insurgency.

Mr. Speaker, these are fantastic statistics.

THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION ON WOMEN

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to represent the millions of American women who would be disproportionately hurt by privatizing Social Security.

First of all, women on average earn less than men. Full-time working women still receive only 73 cents to every dollar earned by a man. This means that women count on Social Security's progressive benefits structure as their primary retirement income more than men.

Women make up about 60 percent of Social Security beneficiaries, and on average live 6 to 8 years longer, so their savings run out sooner.

In my district, there are more than 10,700 households headed by women who are the guardians of their families. The average income in my district is about \$41,000, and Social Security assures economic stability for women retirees. At the end of 2003, women's average monthly retirement benefit in my district was about \$798, and the men's average benefit was about \$1,039.

The gender disparities mean we must fight to protect women. Let us not call Social Security a crisis. Let us fix it so that everybody is treated equally and so that benefits are stabilized.

TROOP STRENGTH

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk for a minute about the importance of maintaining America's all-volunteer military in order to fight and win the global war on terror.

That military is very dependent on the integrated Armed Forces, our

guardsmen and Reserves who are available to us at what I think should be times of crisis or need.

I would like to place before the House today six guidelines that I intend to use as we move forward toward looking at our decisions on military preparedness.

The first of those points is simply to maintain our commitment to a fully integrated force.

Number two, to challenge the administration to allocate resources in a manner that ensures that our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are well-equipped and well-funded.

Number three, achieve the right size of force.

Number four, establish the right mix of force.

Number five, retain the force by doing those things necessary for relieving the burden on soldiers and their families.

Number six, preserve the long-term dominance of America's fighting force.

Mr. Speaker, we have no greater responsibility than to provide for our national defense. The Founders of our government stated this very clearly in the Preamble to our Constitution. We must continue to maintain that constitutional commitment.

REBUILDING SOCIETY WITH TRUE RESPECT FOR WOMEN AND THE BEAUTIFUL GIFT OF LIFE

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

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday tens of thousands of people came to Washington to peacefully stand for life.

I am particularly encouraged, Mr. Speaker, by the multitudes of young people who came and who, despite a culture of death that rages around them, have courageously challenged the judgment of the Supreme Court, showing us that we can be a country of life-giving love, even for those in the most difficult situations.

These young people are saying that abortion is a fundamental injustice against women and their unborn children; that abortion has caused a deep wound in the soul of the country, resulting in untold grief and violence.

These young people are saying that women deserve better, especially those who may feel coerced into abortion. They are the compassionate voices for so many of us in need of healing.

Mr. Speaker, these young people have given me hope that we can rebuild our society with true respect for women and the beautiful gift of life.

HONORING MONSIGNOR IGNATIUS McDERMOTT

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, during the period when we were away, the Nation lost one of my favorite people, Father Ignatius McDermott, better known as Father Mac.

Father Mac was a Catholic priest who, when Chicago had an area known as Skid Row, used to walk among the men who were basically alcoholics, out of work, and would minister to them at night, and became known as the Skid Row Priest.

Later on he founded Haymarket Center, which has become one of the most effective substance abuse treatment centers in the country today. Father Mac worked right up to the moment when he gave his last measure of life.

Mr. Speaker, I commend him for his work and for his efforts. There are thousands who are living rejuvenated lives because of the work of Father Mac.

We thank you, Father Mac.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote of the yeas and nays are ordered or on which the vote is objected to under clause 8 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

CONGRATULATING PEOPLE OF UKRAINE FOR DEMOCRATIC, TRANSPARENT AND FAIR RUN-OFF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 16) congratulating the people of Ukraine for conducting a democratic, transparent, and fair runoff Presidential election on December 26, 2004, and congratulating Victor Yushchenko on his election as President of Ukraine and his commitment to democracy and reform, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 16

Whereas the establishment of a democratic, transparent, and fair election process for the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine and of a genuinely democratic political system have been prerequisites for that country's full integration into the international community of democracies;

Whereas the Government of Ukraine has accepted numerous specific commitments governing the conduct of elections as a participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE);

Whereas the election of Ukraine's next president was seen as an unambiguous test of the extent of the Ukrainian authorities' commitment to implement these standards and build a democratic society based on free elections and the rule of law;