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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

CONGRATULATING ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest cliches in sports is that you do not want your team to be number two.

However, the same does not hold true in other areas. That is why today I want to congratulate the entire St. Mary's College of Maryland community, including the students, alumni and parents and President Margaret O'Brien and the extraordinary faculty, for being ranked the number two public liberal arts college in the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, it will surprise no one that St. Mary's College is in my district. Furthermore, for full disclosure, I am on the board of trustees of St. Mary's College. It is an extraordinary institution of higher learning.

In fact, according to the latest college rankings by the magazine U.S. News and World Report, St. Mary's College is again one of the top 100 liberal arts colleges in the Nation, rising to 84 from 87 the year before. So not only is it number two of small colleges; it is number 84 in the entire Nation of all colleges.

When it comes to public liberal arts colleges, St. Mary's finished only behind the Virginia Military Institute in the U.S. News rankings.

Those rankings are based upon several criteria of academic excellence, including graduation and retention rates, faculty resources and peer assessment.

And this year, St. Mary's peer assessment rose to 2.9 out of a possible 5.0, and the freshmen retention rate rose to 88 percent.

Mr. Speaker, with roots going back to 1840, St. Mary's College is the State of Maryland's only public honors college, offering the academic excellence of a top private college with the openness and affordability of public education.

Today, about 1,950 men and women from 35 States and 23 countries attend St. Mary's, and the average SAT score for the entering freshmen is 1,252. The faculty also has distinguished itself, and more than 94 percent hold doctorate degrees.

By combining the virtues of public and private education, St. Mary's provides a unique alternative for students and their families. This special identity underpins the college's success and

its reputation for excellence, in a waterfront setting in the heart of the Chesapeake Bay region just 70 miles southeast of Washington. It is an extraordinarily beautiful setting for an extraordinarily excellent college.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the college's board of trustees since 1995, I have seen this wonderful institution flourish over the last decade, and I am particularly pleased to see St. Mary's is winning national recognition among its peers. This is not the first time that has been the case, but it is a continuing affirmation of the excellence at St. Mary's.

Our 34th President, John F. Kennedy, once said: "Education is the main-spring of our economic and social progress. It is the highest expression of achievement in our society, ennobling and enriching human life."

Mr. Speaker, St. Mary's College of Maryland truly enriches southern Maryland and our entire State. I want to congratulate the entire St. Mary's College community on receiving this latest national recognition. Well done, well deserved.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to give my Special Order speech at this time.

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

There was no objection.

PRICE GOUGING

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

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the markup we had last night in the Committee on Energy and Commerce on the energy bill. The purpose of the energy bill being brought forth by the Republican majority is to address price gouging. We would like to see the price of gasoline go down; and certainly with the excessive profits being demonstrated by the oil companies, especially the refinery companies, we have to do something instead of being gouged at the gas pump.

So last night the committee worked some 16 hours, until well after midnight. What we found was this. This chart was in The Washington Post last Sunday. The price of a gallon of gas in 1 year, the price to take it out of the ground, domestic and foreign countries pump crude from the ground, has increased 46 percent in 12 months.

The refiners, refineries process crude oil and a variety of products, including gasoline. In 1 year, their profit or their increase is 255 percent.

Down here are the distributors. They ship the gasoline from the terminal by

truck to the gas station. Their cost has only gone up 5 percent. The end result is in the last 12 months, gas has gone up 64 percent for the American consumer. Even State, Federal, and local taxes have only gone up 2 pennies, a negligible increase.

When Members look at the chart, if we want to try to control the price of gasoline, you have to look at the crude oil producers and definitely the refiners at a 255 percent increase in their costs and price to a gallon of gas in the last 12 months.

So what happened last night in committee?

The Democrats said let us take a look at the Republican bill that we just saw. What they did was this, and we almost defeated it. It was a 26-24 vote. We lost by two votes. It is a bill we will be discussing next week on the floor.

The Republicans said we are not going to go after the producers; they can make a 46 percent profit in 12 months. We are not going to go after the refiner; they can make a 255 percent increase profit in 12 months. We are going after the gas station dealer, the one at 5 percent. If they increase their profits more than 10 percent, we are going after the gas station operators, but not all gas station operators, only ones located in the area where the President has declared a disaster.

The Republican bill basically says this, we have two disasters in this country, Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. So parts of Texas, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, they cannot increase their price for gasoline. But the rest of the Nation and north Louisiana, north Alabama, north Mississippi and north and west Texas, they can still increase their prices, no control. They can gouge 255 percent, 46 percent and that is okay under our bill. We are only concerned about the gas station owner who has the least amount to say about the cost of a gallon of gas.

So once again Big Oil wins out. Big refineries win out, and the poor person trying to make a penny off a gallon of gas at the gas station is going to get nailed by the majority party's legislation.

The Democratic side has our legislation, Free Us From Price Gouging. In our bill we apply all of the way down the chain here every type of oil product: home heating oil, propane, natural gas, gasoline. It all comes under our price gouging legislation. We apply it to producers, refiners, and retailers. We take them all into consideration. We apply our price gouging to the entire Nation.

This winter the Midwest is going to pay a 71 percent increase in the price of natural gas. Underneath the Republican bill, there is nothing you can do about it because it only applies to gasoline and diesel. Under the Democratic bill, we can see if there is excessive

profits, then you have a right to do something about price gouging.

Under the Democrats' bill, we are going to have the FTC define what price gouging is and what factors go into it and then apply it to the facts of this case. We are after excessive profits like 255 percent in 12 months or 46 percent in 12 months, not the person who makes 5 percent in 12 months. And we want it to apply throughout the Nation, not just at the time of disaster and in the area affected by the disaster.

We provide the FTC with the right and authority to watch market manipulation. The majority party is silent on that fact.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to address the House out of order.

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

There was no objection.

IRAQ AND PRISONER ABUSE

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, 8 months ago standing outside this dome, the President of the United States spoke these words as he was sworn in for a second term: "We will persistently clarify the choice before every ruler and every nation, the moral choice between oppression, which is always wrong, and freedom which is eternally right. All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors."

Beautiful words, honorable sentiments, if only the Bush administration

were conducting this war in Iraq in a way that actually reflects those values.

Last week, Human Rights Watch released a report that details once again how Iraqi war prisoners were subjected to acts of sadistic cruelty at the hands of their supposed liberators. This time it was at Forward Operating Base Mercury, where beatings and other forms of humiliation took place on a daily basis for several months. Often, this was not even about interrogation or securing some vital piece of national security. "In a way, it was sport," said one sergeant in the 82nd Airborne, a way to "work out your frustration."

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What is perhaps most tragic is that our soldiers who have committed these acts are themselves victims as well, victimized by their incompetent and amoral superiors who give a wink and a nod to torture and then blame it on a few bad apples. One officer in the 82nd Airborne, Captain Ian Fishback, was appalled by the prisoner abuse and tried in vain for a year and a half to get some clarification from his superiors about how prisoners should be treated, given that the administration had essentially tossed the Geneva Conventions in the trash can. He got no answers because the Pentagon seemed to want the abuse to continue but did not want to take any responsibility for it.

That is how it works with this crowd: The powerless take the fall while the high-level decisionmakers who make bad decisions are left in place to make more bad decisions. So it is that Lynndie England faces jail time for her conduct at Abu Ghraib while Tommy Franks gets the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The prisoner abuse episode is consistent with everything else about the way this war has been handled. It indicates both a moral blind spot and a staggering incompetence that has cost nearly 2,000 Americans their lives. The Bush administration had no plan for how to conduct this war, they had no plan for securing the country once Saddam was deposed, and now they have no plan for ending the war. We need a compassionate and we need a viable exit strategy, one that ends the occupation but still gives us a constructive role in the rebuilding of Iraqi society. If the President will not do it, we will. If the President will not lead, we will.

Two weeks ago, I held an informal bipartisan hearing to discuss plans to withdraw our troops and end the war. We heard from a panel of Middle East experts and military strategists, just the kind of people George Bush should have listened to along his march to war, all of whom testified about the need for a change in U.S. policy in Iraq. The hearing was not about endorsing one particular approach. My goal was to put ideas on the table, to start a conversation that the Nation wants

and the Nation deserves. Two-thirds of the American people disapprove of the President's handling of Iraq, and yet it has been some sort of taboo around this place to discuss troop withdrawal. The American people are way ahead of Congress on this. It is about time we caught up, it is about time we realized this war is not making America any safer. It is about time we brought our brave soldiers home.

RESPONSE TO SECRETARY BENNETT'S COMMENTS

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

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, this evening I rise to express my deep disdain and disgust for comments made yesterday on his radio show by former Secretary of Education William Bennett.

He said, and I quote, "You could abort every black baby in this country and your crime rate would go down. That would be an impossible, ridiculous, and morally reprehensible thing to do, but your crime rate would go down."

These are shameful words, Mr. Speaker. I am appalled to have to say them on the floor of the House of Representatives. Secretary Bennett's words reflect a narrow-minded spirit that has no place within American discourse. These words do not reflect the values of hope and opportunity for the future, they do not reflect the values of the American people, Democrat or Republican. Secretary Bennett does not reflect American mainstream values; he did not when he was Secretary of Education and he does not now. Leaders are called to higher standards than Secretary Bennett has demonstrated. We have a responsibility to lead, to be an example.

As Americans feel the pain of two hurricanes, as Americans still reel from questions about the role that race and poverty played in the government response to these devastating hurricanes, we must stand sentry against any hint of racism, any indication of injustice, any moment of intolerance. Now is not the time for divisive comments, now is the time for coming together, now is the time for healing.

What could possibly have possessed Secretary Bennett to say those words, especially at this time? What could he possibly have been thinking? This is what is so alarming about his words.

I urge President Bush to renounce his statement, and I call on Secretary Bennett to apologize. I encourage my Republican colleagues to join me on the House floor to reject these words and to speak for a future of tolerance and equality. I invite Secretary Bennett and other Republicans to join Democrats in creating solutions to national