

within the walls of Congress and he has served these years with dignity and decorum.

As Mr. Friedman prepares to retire, I congratulate him and wish him the best. He has certainly earned the opportunity to kick up his heels, enjoy some time with his wife, and play a few rounds of golf. But as a Member of Congress, I must say that it is sad to see him go. For 20 years, he has been a fixture in the Cloakroom—an institution as significant as the Cloakroom itself.

Mr. Friedman will be missed, but his work ethic will continue on, through his co-workers who admire him, through the many pages who have looked to him for guidance over the years and through the Democratic Members of Congress themselves.

I thank Mr. Friedman for his service and his commitment to the Democratic Cloakroom. The qualities he embodies—loyalty, trustworthiness, reliability—are getting harder and harder to find nowadays. May God bless this admirable man and his family as he begins this next chapter.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in order to honor Mr. Tim Friedman on the occasion of his retirement.

Mr. Friedman, I wish many congratulations to you, and please accept my heartfelt thank you for your 30 years of service to the United States Congress.

Over the years, you have been a close witness to some of the greatest reforms, oratories, and achievements in legislative history. We have looked to you for your advice and trusted you completely and unhesitatingly. You have been a confidant of legislators, and your sagacity has no match.

I have enjoyed and appreciated your good humor, good judgment, and your leadership in the Democratic Cloakroom. Throughout the early mornings and late nights, your very presence contributed solidity and strength to the proceedings of the day.

Your service to your country will long be remembered by Members such as myself, and we will miss your compassion and your enthusiasm. Your hard work, dedication, and commitment are cherished.

You have earned the respect, the admiration, and the affection of all of us who have worked with you. As you move forward to your next success, I have no doubt that you will make your compatriots proud and continue to fulfill your commitment to public service.

All of my best wishes and blessings to you in your future endeavors.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Mr. Tim Friedman's 30 years of dedicated service in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Democratic Cloakroom.

Now 30 years may seem like a long time, but really it's only 6 in "Tim Years." That is to say, six World Series wins resulting in rings for the Yankees. I have to wonder if Tim's retirement may have something to do with the prospect of Barry Sullivan's Boston Red Sox winning a few more World Series' and narrowing the Yankees' lead in titles.

Now safe at home—quite literally—I can publicly disclose how I caused one blemish on Tim's otherwise perfect congressional record. The March Madness NCAA basketball tournament bracket was overseen by Tim for years, and he ran a tight ship. You were in by

the deadline, or you were out of the pool—except for this one time.

On a late flight home I realized that I had forgotten to put my entry in for the congressional NCAA pool. As soon as I returned to D.C., I petitioned the court of last resort, Tim Friedman, believing my cause was virtually hopeless, but imagining myself shooting that desperate last second three-pointer to win the big game.

To my complete surprise, Tim allowed my desperate shot to count, and he allowed me to slip in my late entry. Even with his charity, I still managed to go 0 and out in the Big Dancel Still, I'll never forget his wisdom for letting me in, and my folly for believing I could handicap the results.

Tim's sports enthusiasm—near-fanaticism, really—will be sorely missed around the Cloakroom. More than that, however, we will miss Tim Friedman's smile, his warmth and his gracious humanity. We hear a lot about world-class athletes. Tim Friedman is a world-class human being.

It has been my distinct pleasure to work with him, an honor to know such a genuine and goodhearted man, and a sad but proud moment for me to say goodbye and best wishes.

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS ACT OF 2005

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to come to the floor tonight to express my strong support for S. 203, the National Heritage Areas Act of 2005. This legislation was debated earlier in this day, and amongst its many provisions the bill contains my legislation, H.R. 1820, the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor Act Amendments of 2005.

S. 203 reauthorizes the Illinois and Michigan Canal Heritage Corridor to receive appropriations and transfers management entity status from the Federal I&M Commission to the not-for-profit Canal Corridor Association. I would like to commend Chairman POMBO and the House Committee on Resources for their hard work on this important piece of legislation which has previously passed the House twice before.

The I&M Canal, the Illinois and Michigan Canal, changed the Nation in 1848 when it opened its first shipping route between New York and New Orleans, designating Chicago as the Nation's greatest inland port at that time. While the canal eventually fell into disuse due to new transportation methods and routes, in 1982, business and industry leaders founded the Canal Corridor Association to help revitalize the I&M Canal region, and in doing so created a national model for regional partnership, conservation, and renewal.

I am proud to say that the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor was America's first charter national heritage area, being created by an act of Congress in 1984, thanks to the efforts of former Congressman Tom Corcoran and former Senator Chuck Percy. For 20 years now, the Federal I&M Commission has worked to carry out the mission of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor. Its efforts have been particularly successful during the past 5 years that Phyllis Ellin has provided strong leadership as the executive director of the commission.

Since 1984, the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor has increasingly become an engine of economic growth in communities up and down the length of the corridor, primarily through an increase in tourism, but also in the use of the corridor for recreational purposes.

I decided to move forward with this legislation after consulting with local officials and those most interested and involved in preserving the heritage of the I&M Canal. This private sector approach contained within my legislation offers more advantages to handle the increased workload brought on by the recent success of the canal and interest in heritage tourism.

As a result, S. 203 designates the Canal Corridor Association as the new management entity of the I&M Canal Heritage Corridor. The CCA seeks to enhance economic vitality by raising awareness of and expanding the parks, trails, landscapes and historic sites that make the I&M Canal region a special place. They have also successfully implemented educational programs and improved the cultural, environmental, historic, and tourism resources that the Canal Corridor offers.

Under the leadership of the Canal Corridor Association, the I&M Canal Reauthorization will continue to successfully educate citizens of the nationally historical importance of the I&M Canal and to play a pivotal role in the continued economic development of our home region. Through the Canal Corridor Association's governance, we will now be able to better enlist private support for the Canal Corridor and promote tourism in our home region.

Once again, I would like to thank Chairman POMBO and the entire Resources Committee for making sure this important legislation passes before we break for the August district work period. I particularly want to thank Speaker HASTERT for his assistance and leadership in this issue as well as Chairman CRAIG THOMAS in the Senate for moving forward with this critical legislation

U.S. OCCUPATION OF IRAQ

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today is the 162nd time that I have come to the floor during Special Orders to discuss the U.S. role in Iraq. Unfortunately, very little has changed on the ground in Iraq over the course of these last 3 years and 162 speeches. Unfortunately, also, official visits to the region by our administration and those who represent the United States of America must still be in secret because the area is so very, very violent.

Our troops increasingly face snipers, roadside attacks, ambushes, and improvised explosive devices, IEDs. Bombings continue to kill and wound nearly 100 Iraq civilians daily, and the country has slid into a civil war. One thing that has changed is this, the United States is now playing the role of occupier.

President Bush claimed that the U.S. would go into the Iraq conflict as a liberator. These days, the more accurate statement is that the United States is an occupier. Our brave men and women of the Armed Forces have not been trained or equipped for this very mission. They are doing the very best they can under the circumstances, but their civilian superiors have let them down. Right now, the best way to support our troops is to set forth a plan to bring them home.

In light of all of this, tomorrow several of my colleagues and I will introduce a bill that will revoke the President's Iraqi war powers. This legislation, the Iraq War Power Repeal Act of 2006, will return the war powers for Iraq back to Congress, back where our Founding Fathers intended.

According to the President, all major war combat was completed just 6 months after Congress authorized the use of force. In fact, he said this while standing aboard an aircraft carrier before a banner reading "Mission Accomplished." Therefore, the United States has no longer been at war since that statement of his 6 months into the war, but rather carrying out an occupation with absolutely no end in sight. The American and the Iraqi people want the United States troops out of Iraq; they want them home where they belong.

Over the objections of many House and Senate Members 3½ years ago, the House voted to support the war in Iraq. We did not vote to support an occupation in Iraq. That is why our goal tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, is to have the congressional leadership allow an up-or-down vote on the occupation. I urge all of my colleagues to cosponsor the Iraq War Powers Repeal Act of 2006 to end this madness once and for all, to stand up for our troops, to bring them home

THE PROTECTION AND EVACUATION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, the Nation has been focused on the war declared by Hezbollah against Israel this past week. And while most of the media focused on stories of the conflict in Israel or Lebanon, they have not covered an aspect of the story critical to our fellow citizens, the protection and evacuation of American citizens from this conflict.

On the day that Hezbollah started this war, we estimated that there were over 20,000 Americans in Lebanon.

□ 2000

I want to first commend our ambassador in Lebanon and the U.S. embassy team in Beirut for rapidly assembling the plans and data on the Americans to be saved. The U.S. Government regularly plans and sometimes executes what is called a noncombatant evacuation operation, or NEO in Pentagon parlance, to rescue Americans abroad. The scale of the Lebanese NEO was very, very large. This operation, assembled on very short notice, responded remarkably to a rapidly changing, massive movement of our fellow citizens.

Some of the unsung heroes of the Lebanon NEO are the men and women of the United States Navy and Marine Corps. I want to give special thanks to the crews of the USS *Nashville*, the USS *Trenton*, and the USS *Whidbey Island*. Along with the merchant vessel *Orient*, the crews of these U.S. navy vessels rescued thousands of Americans from Lebanon over the last several days. The crews of these ships were backed by U.S. Marines flying helicopters to save the people in most urgent need.

I also want to thank the men and women of the U.S. Transportation Command who arranged military airlifts for Americans living in Cyprus, and now Turkey, to complete their trips home to the U.S.A.

We must also note the outstanding contribution of the State of Maryland and its governor, Governor Ehrlich, who welcomed them at Baltimore Washington International Airport.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. John Michael of my district called me from Lebanon to ask for his support. I arranged for his registration and quick contact with the U.S. embassy there. Thanks to the work of the United States Navy, the Marine Corps, the State Department and the Transportation Command, Dr. Michael, his wife Christine and their children, Daniel, Ramson, Edessan and Kamber, all from my district, were

caught in Lebanon, but now were rescued by the U.S. military and State Department. But for this operation, they might still be in harm's way, but thanks to the work of these professionals, the men and women of the State Department, Navy and Marine Corps, they are home in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, we have saved over 5,000 Americans to date, and I am told today that the number of Americans seeking to leave Lebanon is now declining. We will soon be the first Nation to use this large logistical effort to begin a massive humanitarian aid lift to support the people of Lebanon itself.

Mr. Speaker, take a moment tonight to thank the young Americans who serve on the *Nashville*, *Whidbey Island* and *Trenton*. Due to their training and professionalism, they were there exactly when thousands of their fellow American citizens needed them to escape from Lebanon.

ESCALATING CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss the escalating conflicts in the Middle East, and bearing in mind that the answer to real stability throughout that region is a resolution to the half century old Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a two-State solution with negotiations ongoing. That has not happened during the lifetime of this administration. In fact, they have ignored that completely.

The second solution is to decouple U.S. foreign policy from our reliance on the oil regimes in the Middle East which supply the largest share of this country's dependence on imported petroleum.

Those are the two answers. We are getting distracted by a lot of other activities in the region, but without a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a two-State solution, and this country being able to stand on its own two feet again, and not have to beg any repressive society for oil, we will not find a solution for security for the American people at home nor abroad.

The situation is worsening. War is an abandonment of reason, and it is critical for Members of Congress to stand for a path to peace, especially at a time that we witness and the world witnesses more killing, more death, more carnage escalating around us, escalating around those directly involved in the Middle East.

It is especially essential to be a voice for peace when others believe that escalating the military option without serious and equal emphasis on political and diplomatic efforts will yield calm and resolution.